

SANT KHALSA



USHA INSTITUTE OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES



Sri Satguru Jagjit Singh Ji E-library

Sri Satguru Jagjit Singh Ji E-library has been created with the approval and personal blessings of Sri Satguru Uday Singh Ji. You can easily access the wealth of teaching, learning and research materials on Sri Satguru Jagjit Singh Ji E-library online, which until now have only been available to a handful of scholars and researchers.

This new Sri Satguru Jagjit Singh Ji E-library allows school children, students, researchers and armchair scholars anywhere in the world at any time to study and learn from the original documents.

As well as opening access to our historical pieces of world heritage, digitisation ensures the long-term protection and conservation of these fragile treasures. This is a significant milestone in the development of the Sri Satguru Jagjit Singh Ji E-Library, but it is just a first step on a long road.

In order to continue conserving, digitising and publishing our numerous literature online, we are asking for your support and involvement.

Please join with us in this remarkable transformation of the Library. You can share your books, magazines, pamphlets, photos, music, videos etc. This will ensure they are preserved for generations to come. Each item will be fully acknowledged.

Digitising our treasures is an ambitious undertaking. Every page, every object, must be photographed individually and with great care. The whole photographic process including lighting, colour temperature, and environmental controls must all be precisely regulated. Post processing is also done with meticulous care including orientation, de-skewing, sizing and finally quality control to ensure the documents reflect the true state of the originals.

To continue this work, we need your help

Your generous contribution and help will ensure that an ever-growing number of the Library's collections are conserved and digitised, and are made available to students, scholars, and readers the world over. The Sri Satguru Jagjit Singh Ji E-Library collection is growing day by day and some rare and priceless books/magazines/manuscripts and other items have already been digitised.

We would like to thank all the contributors who have kindly provided items from their collections. This is appreciated by us now and many readers in the future.

Contact Details

For further information about the process or your contribution - please contact

Email: NamdhariElibrary@gmail.com

SANT KHALSA

1978

BY
GURMIT SINGH
M. A., LL. B.

SANT KHALSA

By

GURMIT SINGH
M. A. LL. B.

1978

Published by :

USHA INSTITUTE OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

RSA—125055

All Rights Reserved with the Author

GURMIT SINGH

Advocate

SIRSA-125055

Price : Rs. 8/- only

Printed at :

Pragati Art Press, Near Rly. Double Phatak, Hissar
Phone : 3262 • Resi : 2567

Dedicated To

MY PEN PAL

MISS IFFAT SULTANA

(MORADABAD)

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

English :

1. **A Critique of Sikhism**
2. **Islam And Sikhism**
3. **Gandhi And The Sikhs**
4. **The Versatile Guru Nanak**

Punjabi :

1. ਗਾਂਧੀ ਜੀ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ
2. ਇੰਟਰ ਕਲਾਸ (ਕਹਾਣੀ ਸੰਗ੍ਰਹ)

ਇਸ ਦੀ (STATEMENT) GURU GRANTH
 ਦੇ CONSTITUTE ਦੇ ਜੋ OPPOSITE 50
 ਇਸ ਲਿਖਾਰੀ ਨੇ ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਦੀ STUDY-RESEARCH
 ਲਈ ਕੀਤੀ (1) PREFACE ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਵਿਖਾ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ
 ਨਿਰਾਸ਼ਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਗੁਰੂ ਦੀ ਯਾਤਰੀ (ਨੜੀ) ਕਦੇ ਖਤਮ ਨਹੀਂ
 ਹੋਵੇ (2) ਗੁਰੂ ਹਰਿਮਤੀ ਦੇ ਪਾਸੇ ਹੈ ॥

Little is known of the *Namdhari* or *Sant Khalsa* as they proudly proclaim themselves to be. The reason is that whatever little has been written by the *Namdhari* authors on the subject is available only in Punjabi and that too owing to the blind devotion of the authors suffers from exaggeration. Further, the attitude of suspicion, distrust and non-co-operation on the part of *Namdhari*s also discouraged the non-*Namdhari* writers to undertake any such writing. Imperfect records, conflicting reports etc. further added to the difficulties involved in writing a comprehensive book on the subject.

I have endeavoured to write this book neither as a hostile critic nor as a devotee or admirer of the faith. At the same time I must, however, concede that my writing suffers from lack of absolute objectivity or detachment. I have, however, tried to compensate for it by incorporating fully the *Namdhari* view-point by drawing extensively from Punjabi literature composed by *Namdhari* writers.

*Namdhari*s are a sect of Sikhism and they profess to be ethically strict followers of Guru Gobind Singh. The major point of difference between the Sikhs and the *Namdhari*s is their concept of the Guru in the present age. The *Namdhari*s believe in a living Guru and, therefore, their pontiff is their Guru. But, according to the Sikhs, the

holy scripture *Granth Sahib* is the person manifest of the Guru.

The Namdharis do not accept the popular belief that Guru Gobind Singh died at Nander after bestowing Guruship on the holy *Granth*. According to them, Guru Gobind Singh had disappeared from that place and thereafter he lived for about 104 years, disguised as Ajaipal Singh. According to Namdharis' version, after his disappearance from Nander, Guru Gobind Singh helped Rustam Rao and Bala Rao to escape from the fort at Poona-Sitara. He is then alleged to have lived at Bhadra (Rajasthan) upto 1812 Bikarmi era and thereafter stayed for six years at Jind and twelve years at Patiala. Thereafter, according to Namdharis, he stayed for the rest of his life at Nabha during which period he also visited Peshawar where he bestowed Guruship on Balak Singh as a trustee saying that he would receive it back when he appears as a reincarnate in the name of Ram Singh at Bhaini.

In support of their assertion that Guru Gobind Singh could not have bestowed Guruship on *Granth Sahib*, the Namdharis quote the example of Guru Harkrishan who, when entreated by the congregation to name his successor, had pointed to the holy *Granth* to be the Guru but was prevailed upon by the congregation to nominate some living person as his successor.

I have not accepted this Namdhari version as correct and I repudiate it as a concocted one. Dr. Ganda Singh and Dr. Trilochan Singh have already done commendable research work to expose the hollowness of the Namdhari version and, therefore, I have drawn extensively from their writings.

I have highlighted the role of the Kukas as forerunners for India's freedom from the British rule. Baba Ram Singh was the first to launch non-cooperation movement against the British and the "Swadeshi" and non-cooperation movements launched by Mahatma Gandhi were nothing but pale imitations of the Kuka movement. Baba Ram Singh baptised his adherents as *Sant Khalsa* on the model of *Sant Sipahi* as visualised by Guru Gobind Singh. Kukas drew their inspiration from the mystique of their being children of Guru Gobind Singh.

Some chapters of this book were earlier published in the form of articles in the Spokesman Weekly, New Delhi. In response to the article "Why Kukas", some letters were received by the editor of the journal from the readers giving different reasons for calling Namdharis as Kukas. I have included these letters in this book as foot-notes to the first chapter as these letters are not only informative but also provide interesting reasoning.

I have tried to cover the varied aspects of the subject such as biographical accounts of all the pontiffs of the sect, their religious life and code of conduct, their mode of worship, their literature and even political participation. But still it is only a brief narrative and not a dissertation.

The very nature of the subject puts limitations on originality. I, therefore, lay no claims to any originality or research although the treatment of the material on the subject by me is definitely original. I owe a deep debt of gratitude to the various authors (list given at the end of this book) whose language, I have freely borrowed and from

whose works, I have derived abundant assistance in writing this book. I am particularly thankful to Sh. Jaimal Singh, Advocate for checking up the proofs and suggesting improvements in language. I am also indebted to S. Swaran Singh Virk, Advocate for helping me with material on the subject. I am equally indebted to S. Gurdial Singh, editor "Satjug" and S. Tarn Singh ji Vehmi for lending me Punjabi literature on the subject. Last but not the least, I am indebted to Malik Arjan Dass, H. C. S. who initiated interest in me for the study of this subject.

How far I have succeeded in my task is for the readers to judge. I have tried to write without any malice or prejudice towards anyone.

I will welcome corrections and suggestions from the readers for the further improvement of this work.

I will feel amply rewarded if a study of this book helps the readers, may be in a small measure, in understanding Namdhari faith.

SIRSA

1st Jan., 1978.

GURMIT SINGH

M.A.L.L.B.

CONTENTS

Why Kukas	...	1
Nonsense Over Succession	...	13
The Founder	...	27
Their Sub-Sects and Splinters	...	34
Namdhari Ardas	...	44
The Fore-Runners For India's Freedom	...	48
Namdhari Rahit Maryada	...	56
Namdhari Literature	...	68
Baba Hari Singh	...	75
Maharaj Partap Singh	...	82
Baba Jagjit Singh	...	98
Bibliography	...	101
Index	...	104

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
61
62
63
64
65
66
67
68
69
70
71
72
73
74
75
76
77
78
79
80
81
82
83
84
85
86
87
88
89
90
91
92
93
94
95
96
97
98
99
100
101
102
103
104
105
106
107
108
109
110
111
112
113
114
115
116
117
118
119
120
121
122
123
124
125
126
127
128
129
130
131
132
133
134
135
136
137
138
139
140
141
142
143
144
145
146
147
148
149
150
151
152
153
154
155
156
157
158
159
160
161
162
163
164
165
166
167
168
169
170
171
172
173
174
175
176
177
178
179
180
181
182
183
184
185
186
187
188
189
190
191
192
193
194
195
196
197
198
199
200
201
202
203
204
205
206
207
208
209
210
211
212
213
214
215
216
217
218
219
220
221
222
223
224
225
226
227
228
229
230
231
232
233
234
235
236
237
238
239
240
241
242
243
244
245
246
247
248
249
250
251
252
253
254
255
256
257
258
259
260
261
262
263
264
265
266
267
268
269
270
271
272
273
274
275
276
277
278
279
280
281
282
283
284
285
286
287
288
289
290
291
292
293
294
295
296
297
298
299
300
301
302
303
304
305
306
307
308
309
310
311
312
313
314
315
316
317
318
319
320
321
322
323
324
325
326
327
328
329
330
331
332
333
334
335
336
337
338
339
340
341
342
343
344
345
346
347
348
349
350
351
352
353
354
355
356
357
358
359
360
361
362
363
364
365
366
367
368
369
370
371
372
373
374
375
376
377
378
379
380
381
382
383
384
385
386
387
388
389
390
391
392
393
394
395
396
397
398
399
400
401
402
403
404
405
406
407
408
409
410
411
412
413
414
415
416
417
418
419
420
421
422
423
424
425
426
427
428
429
430
431
432
433
434
435
436
437
438
439
440
441
442
443
444
445
446
447
448
449
450
451
452
453
454
455
456
457
458
459
460
461
462
463
464
465
466
467
468
469
470
471
472
473
474
475
476
477
478
479
480
481
482
483
484
485
486
487
488
489
490
491
492
493
494
495
496
497
498
499
500
501
502
503
504
505
506
507
508
509
510
511
512
513
514
515
516
517
518
519
520
521
522
523
524
525
526
527
528
529
530
531
532
533
534
535
536
537
538
539
540
541
542
543
544
545
546
547
548
549
550
551
552
553
554
555
556
557
558
559
560
561
562
563
564
565
566
567
568
569
570
571
572
573
574
575
576
577
578
579
580
581
582
583
584
585
586
587
588
589
590
591
592
593
594
595
596
597
598
599
600
601
602
603
604
605
606
607
608
609
610
611
612
613
614
615
616
617
618
619
620
621
622
623
624
625
626
627
628
629
630
631
632
633
634
635
636
637
638
639
640
641
642
643
644
645
646
647
648
649
650
651
652
653
654
655
656
657
658
659
660
661
662
663
664
665
666
667
668
669
670
671
672
673
674
675
676
677
678
679
680
681
682
683
684
685
686
687
688
689
690
691
692
693
694
695
696
697
698
699
700
701
702
703
704
705
706
707
708
709
710
711
712
713
714
715
716
717
718
719
720
721
722
723
724
725
726
727
728
729
730
731
732
733
734
735
736
737
738
739
740
741
742
743
744
745
746
747
748
749
750
751
752
753
754
755
756
757
758
759
760
761
762
763
764
765
766
767
768
769
770
771
772
773
774
775
776
777
778
779
780
781
782
783
784
785
786
787
788
789
790
791
792
793
794
795
796
797
798
799
800
801
802
803
804
805
806
807
808
809
810
811
812
813
814
815
816
817
818
819
820
821
822
823
824
825
826
827
828
829
830
831
832
833
834
835
836
837
838
839
840
84

WHY KUKAS

The word "Namdhari" literally means bearer of the Nam (Name of God) i. e. the one who wears God's name as a necklace round his heart. Thus Namdhari is a person who is imbued with the love of God and constantly meditates on Him.

Although the Namdharis claim to be ethically strict followers of Guru Gobind Singh and not a separate Sikh sect, they do not share the general belief with the Sikhs that Guru Gobind Singh before his death had invested Granth Sahib (The Sikh Scripture) with Guruship and had abolished the institution of living Guru. They challenge the authenticity of the declaration by Guru Gobind Singh which is recited by the Sikhs after their daily prayer which reads as follows:

"Accept the Holy Granth as Guru, as it is the visible personification of the Gurus. Whoever wants to meet God, may find Him through its word."

The reason for challenging the authenticity about its authorship is that this couplet is found nowhere in the

writings of Guru Gobind Singh. It is found in a book, "Panth Parkash" written by Giani Gian Singh which was published in 1880 A. D.

It is also written in the Rehatnama (code of conduct) by Bhai Prahlad Singh which is said to be written in Samat 1752 (1695 A. D.). From this date of its composition, this Rehatnama appears to be written during the life time of Guru Gobind Singh and its author also claims that he wrote it at Nander at the instance of Guru Gobind Singh. But two facts create doubt about the authenticity of this statement.

As Bhai Kahan Singh has remarked "the author of the Rehatnama did not bother to understand that in Samat 1752 (1695 A. D.) the Guru (Gobind Singh) was not at Nander, nor had the Khalsa been created."

The Khalsa was created in 1699 A. D. and the Guru had gone to Nander in 1708 A. D. But this may be explained by pointing out that generally rules of conduct are framed before the formation of an association or a society. Guruji's visit to Nander in 1695 A. D. may be a subject for historical research. Therefore, notwithstanding the Namdharis' arguments doubting the authenticity of Rehatnama by Bhai Prahlad Singh, general mass of the Sikhs believe in its correctness. But Namdharis believe in a living human being as their Guru.

A Namdhari, writes, Bhai Kahan Singh, is "one who has obtained Mantar (the secret word) from the Guru."

The Name, according to the Namdharis, is the sacred and secret word which is whispered into the ear of the seeker to be initiated by the living Guru. The Namdharis support this method of initiation by reciting the verse written by Guru Ramdas in the Adi Granth, which reads : "God, the life of world, is my vital breath. When the Guru ministered the Name through my ear, the Supreme Lord became pleasing unto my mind " Therefore, no one except the living Guru or person authorised by him can baptise converts.

The Namdharis were originally baptised as "Sant Khalsa." This title sums up the mission of Baba Ram Singh -the revival of the spirit of the Khalsa by recasting the Sikhs in the very image of the first five beloveds of Guru Gobind Singh as saint-soldiers.

Hindu priesthood had rehabilitated itself amongst the Sikhs during the time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and under its guidance the Sikhs had adopted practices which were specifically disapproved of by the Sikh Gurus. The simplicity preached by Sikh Gurus had come to be warped by the Hindu complexities and rituals. Baba Ram Singh, therefore, laid emphasis on simplicity and austerity in ceremonies as laid down by the Sikh Gurus and absolute necessity of getting one-self baptised according to Sikh traditions and removal of Hindu rituals.

The Namdharis, according to Khushwant Singh, more strictly adhere to the puritanical faith of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh than other Sikhs. They lead austere



lives, wear the simplest of clothes and observe a rigid code of conduct, they are punctilious in attending service in their gurdwaras...”

Another title for Namdharis, which finds frequent mention in the official record, is “Kuka” which means a shouter. It has been derived from the Punjabi word “Kook” which means a long and loud cry, making shrill sound. Namdharis acquired this title because they in their religious assemblies while singing God’s praises in a state of religious ecstasy, raised loud cries.

According to Dr. Natha Singh, the Namdharis were first called Kukas by village urchins who heard their cries of Sat Sri Akal. According to a Namdhari writer, Sant Nidhan Singh Alam, they were called Kukas because they raised the first cry of freedom in the Punjab.

Baba Ram Singh eschewed politics but, to many, his teachings tended to show that his long term objective was to prepare the people for self-depedence. He laid emphasis on the boycott of the British courts, the British postal system, foreign cloth and non-cooperation with all that was British. It was the first movement of this kind with political tinge amongst the Sikhs after the annexation of Punjab by the British. Writing as late as 1896, J. P. Warburton, an English senior police officer who had a close acquaintance with the Kuka sect from the beginning of 1872, observed:

“I am satisfied that the political aspirations of the sect, their hostility towards the ruling power and



their capacity and disposition of seriously disturbing the public peace are still harboured, though in a latent form. The inflammable material exists in abundance and needs only a spark to ignite it."

(office of the Pol. Agent Phulkian States, Confid. file D. 4 vol. 1)

Therefore, while recognising the role of the Namdharis in preparing the masses for freedom from British rule, it must be submitted that Sant Nidhan Singh's explanation of their being called "Kukas" because of their raising cry of freedom seems to be only an attempt to justify the name which acquired popularity because of the Namdharis being the shouters in frenzy.

The Namdhari movement has a place of honour in spiritual renaissance of Sikhism and also in India's struggle for freedom. Today they form a distinctly cohesive group among the Sikhs. The style of their headgear distinguishes them in appearance from rest of the Sikhs. Apparelled in immaculate, white home-spun, they wind round their heads mull or longcloth without any semblance or embellishment and without giving it any sharp, emphatic lines.



FOOT-NOTES

I

Sir, The facts given about the Namdharis on page 6 of 28th June issue of the '*Spokesman*' are quite authentic and convincing. The word "*Kuka*" the Namdharis derive from another word "*Kukar*" (*Kuta*) meaning a dog. As the dog is expected to cry for his master, in Punjabi (*bhaunkana*), similarly a Namdhari is to cry for his God or Guru, hence he is called *Kuka*.

The couplet, which the Sikhs sing in unison after their prayer (*Ardas*), means as under-"I have started the Panth under orders of the (*Akal*) God. I order all my followers (Sikhs) to accept Sri Guru Granth as their future Guru."

That the 10th Guru, Gobind Singh, went to Nander in 1707 A.D. and not in 1695 A.D. is a fact admitted on all hands and, therefore, it is not a subject of historical research at all, as the writer of the article, Sardar Gurmit Singh, suggests.

How the Namdharis give Nam to others can well be depicted by my personal example. In year 1914, I was a student of 9th class, aged 16. Bhagat Singh Datawaliya who was a renowned Namdhari preacher of those days met us (about six students) when we were coming back in the evening from school. He demanded from all of us : "Who amongst you, boys, is the son of Sardar Dharam Singh of



Sehjoki ?" The boys pointed towards me. Sant Bhagat Singh (as he was addressed) caught hold of me and by touching his lips with an ear of mine whispered three times *wahiguru, wahiguru* and *wahiguru*", and then let me go. And that is called initiation as a Namdhari or as *Nam Dena*.

Had it not been a question of accepting a *deh dhari guru* (a guru in flesh and blood), then I would have been the first man to become a Namdhari.

—Mool Singh Cheema

2

Sir, I was very upset to read the remarks against Namdharis that "their *kook* means the howling or barking of a dog or *kutta*." It is not high thinking but denigrating. It also speaks of the views of a person who is referring to this *kook* and *kukas* in such a lowering manner.

Kuka is not derived from *Kook* or a long or loud shouting during ecstasy and mystic trance; one is over-powered while singing Shabads or reciting the sacred scripture. Then one not only yields a *kook* in ecstasy but danced round and round in this mystic trance. I have seen it with my own eyes.

'*Kuka*' is a clan which is thinly spread all over India, and the Middle eastern countries like Iran, Egypt, Palestine and Syria as well as Turkey. If one reads newspapers, one will have found a *kuka* minister in the above countries like Iran, Egypt, Turkey, Palestine and Syria. While I was serving in the Tata Hospital in Jamshedpur after retiring from the army

my next-door neighbor was Mr. *kuka*, *Supdt.* Engineer of TISCO, who later on became Chief Engineer of Construction TISCO. He was a Parsi gentleman.

Kukalaya is a strip of hilly tract near the Eastern Himalayas. Thus, Kukalay is a sub-caste of Indians which means hailing from this area. Kuka or Kakar is also a sub-caste of Indian Khatris. That is also because it pertains to kukas. I request Sardar Gurmeet Singh, who referred to Namdharis on page 6 of your 28th June issue, to find out if Baba Balak Singh or Baba Ram Singh belonged to this clan of kukas.

I am also forced to write this letter because of another letter on page 9th of your issue of 19th July.

I will like to find out from Dr. Gurmeet Singh or Col. Gurcharan Singh of Calcutta, how Baba Balak Ram was initiated into Sikhism as Baba Balak Singh.

Is it not a fact that Bhagat Dyala (*Kalai*), a sufi and mystic saint, during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, initiated Baba Balak Singh into Sikhism along with Baba Gurcharan Singh? From that the Nirankari clan started. Bhagat Dyala instructed Baba Balak Singh and Baba Gurcharan Singh, to keep in mind that the empire of Maharaja Ranjit Singh had been snatched away from the Sikhs by fraud, so they must revolt against the British and restore this empire to the Sikhs again.

This is how both of them revolted. Baba Gurcharan Singh later on settled at Rawalpindi and started Nirankari faith.



But Baba Ram Singh till the end of his life kept up the revolt. This rebellion was continued after his death by his followers.

Bhagat Dyala was a descendant of Rishi Attrey, author of *Attereyanka* commentary on the Vedas and Dean of Buddhist Vidyapith, Taxila during Ashoka's rule. Bhagat Dyala belonged to a small village Hazro, near the ruins of Taxila or Abbotabad, now in Pakistan.

—Dr. Dalip Singh

3

Sir, Guru Gobind Singh went to Nander in 1708, and not in 1707, as mentioned in a letter published in the '*Spokesman*' of July 19, 1976, page 9, column 4 perhaps, it is a typing or a printing mistake.

In 1707, he was in northern India. In February, 1707, he was in the neighbourhood of Baghaur in Rajasthan where he received the news of the death of Emperor Aurangzeb. He was in Delhi on May 20 when Bahadur Shah arrived there from the north-west. He met him on July 23, 1707, near Agra when the Emperor presented him a rich *Khilat*. The winter of 1707 and the early summer of 1708 were spent in Rajasthan. It was in the last week of June 1708 that Emperor Bahadur Shah crossed the river Tapti on his march to the Deccan and Guru Sahib accompanied him thither and arrived at Nander in the last week of August 1708. On the 3rd of September, 1708, the solar eclipse day, the Guru met *Saahu Madho Dass Bairagi* on the bank of the

Godawari and converted him into a Singh and gave him the new name of Banda Singh, with the title of *Bahadur*. It was here at Nander that he was stabbed by a Pathan from Sirhind and he breathed his last on Katik Sudi 5, 1765 Bikrmi, October 7, 1708.

—Ganda Singh

Sir, In the "*Spokesman*" Weekly of 2nd August, 1976, a letter from Dr. Dalip Singh of New Delhi about the Namdhari was published. He has posed a question-answer: "Is it not a fact that Bhagat Dyala (Kalal), a sufi and mystic saint, during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, initiated Baba Balak Singh into Sikhism along with Baba Gurcharan Singh? From that the Nirankari clan started. Baba Gurcharan Singh later on settled at Rawalpindi and started Nirankari faith". In this strain he continues tracing the genealogy of Bhagat Dyala (Kalal).

The doctor has not quoted any authority for his novel assertion. I have for the first time learnt from Dr. Dalip Singh that Bhagat Dyala was a Kalal. It seems that the doctor is mixing up Bhagat Jawahar Mall Shabib who was a Kalal (The Sikh Review Appendix XVI January, 1972) with Sahib Baba Dyal Ji (Khtari-Malhotra), the recognised founder of the Nirankari Movement.

I have searched the Sikh history books but there I have found no mention of Baba Gurcharan Singh whom credit is being given for founding Nirankari Movement by

the learned doctor. I would request the doctor to enlighten us about the points raised in his letter.

—Man Singh Nirankari

5

Sir, On page 9 of your issue of August 2, the letter by Dr. Ganda Singh is factual while the letter of Dr. Dalip Singh of New Delhi lacks authenticity. First of all he should have verified from some Namdhari leader or from Bhaini Shahib, Ludhiana, the headquarters of the Namdharis sect, why the Namdharis prefer to be called as Kukas. These remarks (that Kuka means a kukar or kutta) were not at all attributed as a degrading or denigrating epithet by me towards the Namdhari sect, as the New Delhi doctor is pleased to surmise. He might have seen the Namdharis (kukas) reciting shabads and dancing in ecstasy once or twice, but I was the witness to such scenes practically daily before I was 20 years of age. Once in 1945, when I was 47, I had witnessed a big diwan of Namdharis at Karachi, which was attended by thousands of people,—Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims. Bhagat Kabir Sahib in his Banis calls himself God's dog. Kook is a Persian word meaning a voice which is loud and shrill, its second meaning is synchronisation of musical sounds and instruments, its third meaning is navy blue colour. Dr. Dalip Singh should please refer to page 604 of Lughat-i-Kishwin 1972 edition printed by Naulkishor Press, Lucknow. Kuka may be a clan as described by Dr. Dalip Singh, but the Kukas

(Namdharis) of the Punjab are mostly Sikh Jats or Ramgarhias and do not have any connection with that clan. There can be some words with the same sound occurring in more than one language as Nankak in Punjabi and Nanking in Chinese, "Maka" or maize in Punjabi, and the Mecca, (the most sacred place of the Muslims. The Doctor himself admits the presence of words with the same sound, as in Kuka clan and Kukalyas, a tract of land in the Himalayas and Kuklay etc.

Baba Balak Singh's sub-caste, I don't know, he must be Khatri because he belonged to Hazro, on the border of the pre-partition Punjab, but Baba Ram Singh was a Ramgarhia (carpenter or *tarrkhan*) and surely both of them belonged to Punjab and had nothing to do with the clan of Kukas which has been traced out by Dr. Dalip Singh.

To call oneself a kutta (dog) is no denigration at all because people in humility bow themselves down to the level of another man's shoes. The great Baba Banda Singh Bahadur (when he first met Guru Gobind Singh) gave his name as 'Banda' which is a Persian word meaning a slave, a servant and an obedient man. Did he denigrate himself?

— Mool Singh Cheema



NONSENSE OVER SUCCESSION

Aurangzeb died in the Deccan, in Ferbruary, 1707, his legal heir to the throne i. e. his eldest son Bahadur Shah was at that time away to Afghanistan. Aurangzeb's younger son Muhammad Azim who was with his father at that time took advantage of the situation and occupied the throne, assumed control of the treasury and command of the imperial army Bahadur Shah decided to fight it out with his brother but as his younger was by now better equipped, he decided to ask for help from whatever source he could hope to get. Bhai Nand Lal, formerly a secretary of Bahadur Shah was one of the poets at the Guru's Darbar and on his advice once Bahadur Shah, then a prince, had sought Guru's blessings. Therefore, Bahadur Shah approached Guru Gobind Singh through Bhai Nand Lal for assistance. As Bahadur Shah was the lawful claimant to the throne and was also a better man than his usurping brother, Guru Gobind Singh agreed to help him and sent some Sikh soldiers under the command of Bhai Dharam Singh to render assistance to Bahadur Shah in recovering the throne through a war of succession.

Bahadur Shah consequently defeated and killed his brother and ascended the throne. Bahadur Shah conveyed his thanks to the Guru through Dharam Singh and sent a request to Guru Gobind Singh for a meeting. Guru Gobind Singh went to meet Bahadur Shah at Agra where he stayed with him as a Royal guest from August to November 1707. He was presented with a robe of honour by the Emperor which he asked a Sikh to carry to his camp. Guru Gobind Singh tried to bridge the gulf between the Muslims and non-Muslims by bringing to the notice of the Emperor the cruel acts committed in the name of religious bigotry by men like Wazir Khan, the Nawab of Sarhind, who had bricked alive two of his innocent minor sons Zorawar and Fateh Singh. Bahadur Shah promised to Guru Gobind Singh that after he was firmly established on the throne he would punish Wazir Khan, the murderer of innocent children. Emperor Bahadur Shah invited Guru Gobind Singh to accompany him to south to which Guru Gobind Singh agreed and after passing through Rajputana, they ultimately reached Nander, a town situated on the bank of river Godaveri, now in the state of Hyderabad. Here Emperor Bahadur Shah requested Guru Gobind Singh to help him in curbing and subjugating the Maharattas, but Guru Gobind Singh refused point blank. Thereupon, Guru Gobind Singh separated from the Emperor and settled himself with his followers at Abchnagar. Here in 1708, Guru Gobind Singh was stabbed by a Pathan at Nander or Abchnagar as a consequence of which Guru Gobind Singh died but there are many conflicting accounts about the details of the incident.

Saina Pat, who was one of the fifty two poets at the

court of Guru Gobind Singh, in his book **Sri Guru Sohba** which he began writing in Sambat 1758 and finished sometime after Sambat 1765 and which is the earliest book on the subject, at page 101 to 105 narrates the incident as under :

“It is heard that one Pathan went to the Guru's darbar with murderous intentions. On the first visit he found too many Sikhs around the Guru and returned to his abode disappointed. He repeated these visits day after day. All the time he was studying the situation and making up his mind about the hour that would best suit his notorious job. From steady observation he concluded that the evening time was the best. So one evening he came to visit Guru ji at a late hour. Guru ji seated the Pathan near his bed and gave him parshad which the Pathan devoured at once. Most of the Sikhs had retired for the night. The only Sikh who was near him was also dozing. A few minutes after the Pathan's arrival the Guru too lay down for rest. The Pathan drew his sword and plunged it into the belly of the Guru. Before the Guru could get up the Pathan made another step. But then his fate was sealed. With one stroke of his sword the Guru severed the head of the treacherous Pathan from his body. Then he called out to his Sikhs and many of them came running. The two confederates of the Pathan tried to escape but they were caught and killed by the Sikhs. When the Sikhs saw the body of the Pathan lying near the Guru, they were about to hack it in the belief that there was lying another of

the suspicious persons but the Guru restrained them by saying that the wretch had already had his due. Till then, no one had noticed that the Guru had been wounded. It was only when he got up and staggered that the Sikhs came to know of the dismal fact. They were struck with grief and anxiety. But the Guru encouraged them by saying "Have no fears. The immortal God has protected me. I am all right." The wounds were washed and sewn but when Guru ji lifted himself a little, the threads broke. They were sewn again. Next day, they were again treated with ointments and were more properly dressed. For some three or four days the Guru did not move from the bed. Sikhs from far and near came in large numbers to see the Guru and they wanted to see it for themselves that the Guru was out of danger. On the earnest treatises of these Sikhs, the Guru agreed to appear in the darbar. Immense was the joy of the Sikhs at beholding their master again. They returned to their homes with joyful hearts. Others came and, after beholding the master, returned in peace and joy. Several days passed in this way. The Guru then felt that the end of his earthly sojourn was near. He retired for the night after taking a little food. About an hour and a half after midnight, he got up and began to recite the Divine word. He then called aloud the Sikhs and bade them the last farewell. Deep was the grief and distress of the Sikhs. They lamented that they had not had an opportunity of talking to the Master. All of them sat together and decided to cremate the Guru's body

before daybreak. This happened on the fifth of the bright half of Kartik Sambat 1765 (November 1701)."

Kavi Sainapati does not describe in detail the last moments and cremation of Guru Gobind Singh. These details are provided in Gurbilas of Sukha Singh and following him by Kavi Santokh Singh in Suraj Parkash. A detailed capsule summary of the Gurbilas of Sukha Singh reads as follows—

"Guru Gobind Singh dressed himself in his usual royal uniform and ordered that after he breathed his last his clothes should not be changed. He should be cremated in the dress he was wearing. He entered the enclosure saying that after the ten Gurus, there was to be no individual Guru. The *Sabad* was the Guru. The Khalsa was in future under the direct protection of Akal Purkh (God). Just before the end of his earthly life, he entered the enclosure and said *Waheguru ji ki Fateh*. There was singing sound of roaring sea all around. The fire blazed."

Another earliest record on Guru Gobind Singh's last sermon is the Gurbilas by Koer Singh. The author of this work was a soldier in the Mugal army and was posted as Sentry in the prison where Bhai Mani Singh was imprisoned for some months before he was executed. During the days when Bhai Mani Singh was imprisoned, he related to the co-prisoners and the guards the story of Guru Gobind Singh's life. Koer Singh resigned from his job, embraced Sikhism

and wrote his work. Its relevant paragraph reads as under:

"Guru Gobind Singh said to Khalsa, "From now on the ten Gurus will live in their eternal invisible form. These are not times to perpetuate individual guruship. There will be no earthly successor from the family of any Guru. I will not anoint (give guruship tilak) to any human being. The whole sangat, the Khalsa, I now place in the arms of the Supreme Being. They are given Shabad Guru (The Word as Guru) as their Guide. The Khalsa should hold the hem of this guide and live in the spirit of God. Know the Granth as your Guide and Guru. Seek guidance from the Sabad alone. The darsan of the Granth Sahib is the darsan of the Guru. Take me now to the presence of the Holy book." They took Guru Gobind Singh to the place where Adi Granth Sahib was installed. Then Guru Gobind Singh said "Now let us go to the holy presence of the Adi Satguru (Granth Sahib). Accompanied by the Khalsa, Guru Gobind Singh moved to the holy presence of Granth Sahib, and after placing a coconut and five paisa in the divine presence of the Granth Sahib he bowed before it, thus installing it as his everlasting successor. After bowing before the Holy Book he went around it in reverence five times and then again bowed before it. Then the Guru said, "In future whoever seeks solace and enlightenment let him seek from the Guru Granth. This is your Guru. Deem not any human being as your Guru equal to it. This is the truth which I proclaim without prejudice and fear."

Therefore, the Sikhs believe that Guru Gobind Singh

installed Adi Granth as the future Guru and issued a clear command that there was to be no human Guru after him. But Namdharis challenge the correctness and authenticity of the above said versions about the death of Guru Gobind Singh and believe that Guru Gobind Singh did not die at Nanded on October 8, 1708 but lived for a hundred years more disguised as Ajapal Singh near Nabha. The reason assigned by the Namdharis for the act of the Guru living under disguise is that Guru Gobind Singh had come to know that the Pathan who had made the murderous assault on him was deputed by the Emperor Bahadur Shah as the Guru had parted from him in no friendly mood. Knowing the military abilities and potential capacity of the Guru, the Emperor could not feel secure as long as the former lived and so he managed a murderous assault on the Guru. In support of this version, Namdharis quote writers like Dault Rai and even Kartar Singh who calls it a plausible explanation. Namdharis derive further support for their above view from *Makhje Twarikh Sikhan* which contains the royal news bulletins of the time of Bahadur Shah. The original bulletins are said to be lying in the Dewane Khas of the Jaipur State. A Report dated 28th of October 1708 reads as follows:

"Ba Arz Rashid ke Guru Gobind Rai, Jamshed Khan Afgan Ra Bazar Kushta Bood Khilat Metmt Ba Pesar Khan Mazkur Marhum Shud." i. e. This receipt relates to the Khilat, Siropa, Sword Shawl, cash and clothes such as turban etc. which were sent as a condolence to the father of Jamshed Khan Pathan who died from the hands of Guru Gobind Rai".

Namdharis rejected the authenticity of the version given by Sainapati in Gur Sobha Granth. Admittedly Sainapati was not an eye-witness to the events after 1700 and he recorded the events in the light of hearsay and random reports. He himself admits this fact frankly when he writes "Sunī Sakh Aise i. e. so have I heard the story " Namdharis rely upon the version given in the Panth Parkash written by Giani Gian Singh which reads as under—

"Guru enacted human drama in this manner, wearing all his armaments he entered the tent. Sacramental food was distributed and praises of God were sung. Guru's horse was given a bath and was set ready with saddle and jewellery. A pyre of Sandalwood was prepared and a tent wall was pitched around it. Daya Singh was told by the Guru that, when he enters the tent all Sikhs should be kept away from it and no one should be allowed to look to this side: No one should search the remains of the funeral nor any monument should be erected. Whoever will erect any memorial, his pedigree will come to an end. Thereafter, Guru ji stood up from his seat and walked towards the pyre. Sikhs were struck with grief and found themselves helpless in a place far away from their homes. Then a saint came to

ॐ

that place and stated that he had met the Guru at a distance of a few miles where Guru ji was riding a horse for hunting and accompanied by his hawk. Sikhs were surprised to hear this and rushed towards the stable but neither the horse nor the hawk was there. Sikhs then stated, "O clever Guru ! What have you done? You have played a deception upon your followers!" Then Sikhs searched the funeral remains and except one sword, no armament which the Guru was wearing could be found.

From the above version, Namdharis argue the following points in support of their theory that Guru Gobind Singh did not die at Nanded and had escaped from there to live in disguise as Ajapal Singh.

- 1) Gian Gian Singh, in his Panth Parkash, calls it "Nar Natake" i.e. human drama.
- 2) The horse and the hawk of Guru Gobind Singh were found missing.
- 3) Armaments which Guru Gobind Singh was wearing when he walked towards the pyre were not found amongst the funeral remains.
- 4) There was no eye-witness of the cremation as all Sikhs were directed by the Guru to keep away from the tent and to sit with their backs towards the pyre. What was the necessity for the tent wall ?
- 5) Guru Gobind Singh, according to this account, himself walked towards the pyre and cremated himself which amounts to suicide, an act not permissible according to Sikhism.

6) A saint had seen Guruji alive after the alleged cremation.

There is no doubt that the version given by Giani Gian Singh is not authentic and he has given a fanciful twist to the event with his colourful imagination. He has elaborated the event with more poetic details with an intent to dramatize the occurrence. However, there is no doubt that there is some serious contradiction in the accounts given by different writers of this cremation ceremony. While Kavi Sainapati and a recently discovered document by Trilochan Singh say that Guru Gobind Singh's body was carried to the pyre by the Khalsa after his death and cremated within the tent wall, Kavi Santokh Singh, Giani Gian Singh and Sukha Singh say that Guruji himself walked to the funeral pyre, and after bidding good-bye to the Khalsa, sat on the funeral pyre in Samadhi and soul left the body, he lighted the funeral pyre with yogic fire emitted from within. In Dasam Granth many sages, saints and heroes such as Lord Rama's brother Bharat, Paras Nath are described to have died this way and, therefore, it is not correct to term such a yogic cremation as suicide. As regards the pitching of the tent wall around the funeral pyre, it may have been done to prevent devout Sikhs from jumping into the funeral pyre as some of the sikhs had done at the cremation of Guru Har Gobind Sahib. As regards the subsequent vision of the Guru by the Sadhu and others, it may be explained by the fact that although

the historical Guru Gobind Singh ends on the day of his death, his spiritual personality continues to live. "Kaun kahe gur moyio", i. e., "who says the Guru is dead." The historical Guru Gobind Singh died but his mystic personality lives in the consciousness of the enlightened and faithful devotees.

In support of their version that Guru Gobind Singh lived near Nabha disguised as Ajapal Singh, the Namdharis derive support from an article written by Bhai Kahan Singh in a magazine "Phulwari" of March, 1927 wherein he describes the personality, the way of living, associates etc. of Ajapal Singh which according to him gave rise to a belief amongst the people of the locality that he was Guru Gobind Singh. But Bhai Kahan Singh does not personally subscribe to the aforesaid view and he clearly states that Guru Gobind Singh died at Nanded and bestowed Guruship on Guru Granth and Panth.

Some recent research has revealed that Baba Ajapal Singh was a soldier of the Misal Period, who after serving Rajput Chiefs for sometime, ultimately settled at Nabha. He had appointed Baba Sarup Singh, great grand--father of Bhai Kahan Singh, as Mahant of his dera after his death. His connection with Baba Balak Singh or Baba Ram Singh is at no stage established.

Moreover, Macauliffe who wrote his book of Sikh history under the advice and with active help of Bhai Kahan Singh, gives the following account of Guru Gobind Singh's death :

"After this the Guru bathed and changed his dress. He then read the Japji and repeated an ardasa or supplication. While doing so, he gave instructions that no clothes should be bestowed as alms in his name. He then put on a muslin waistband, slung his bow on his shoulder and took his musket in his hand. He opened the Granth Sahib and placing five paise and coconut before it solemnly bowed to it as his successor. Then uttering "Wahguru Ji ka Khalsa, Wahguru Ji ki Fateh", he circumambulated the sacred volume and said, "O beloved Khalsa! Let him who desireth to behold me, behold the Guru Granth. Obey the Granth Sahib. It is the visible body of the Guru. And let him who desireth to meet me diligently search its hymns."

From the above account too it is evident that Bhai Kahan Singh did not subscribe to the Namdhari view point regarding the continuity of human gurus. Besides, there are court records of Nabha for the past 250 years and also some works in Persian on the mediaeval history of Nabha but none of them mentions the link between Ajapal Singh and Guru Gobind Singh. Had it been true, it would have found a prominent place in the aforesaid records.

According to Namdharis, Guru Gobind Singh lived for 146 years and died only after meeting Baba Balak Singh. But this theory is not tenable. Ajapal Singh died on 14th June, 1812, whereas according to Giani Gian Singh, Baba Balak Singh was born in 1799. Thus Baba Balak

४१२
१७११
१७३

Singh was only 13 years old at the time of Ajapal Singh's death, whereas according to Namdharis Baba Balak Singh was a youngman of about 25 years at the time he met Ajapal Singh. Moreover, Ajapal Singh appointed his most favourite disciple Sarup Singh as his successor and not Baba Balak Singh. All these facts take wind out of Namdharis' version that Guru Gobind Singh escaped from Nander and lived long after that as Baba Ajapal Singh, a fact which according to Namdharis was only known to Bhai Rama and Bhai Tiloka, the two close disciples of Ajapal Singh who died without divulging this secret.

Namdhari movement has always been headed by a pontiff and to retain their hold on their disciples they have concocted false versions to win support for their theory of personal Guruship, by asserting the claim of their pontiff to be a successor to Guru Gobind Singh. The fact is that Guru Gobind Singh had before his death put an end to personal Guruship. This fact is supported by writers like Sainapat who in his Sri Gur Sobha which he wrote in 1711 writes :

"A day before his death, the Singhs asked him as to the form he was adopting (or the person whom he was nominating to succeed him). In reply he said that the Khalsa was his very self and that to them he had granted his robe—his physical self, and that the eternal and limitless word uttered with the Lord's light is our Supreme Master."

But the Namdharis argue that the words used by

Sainapat is "Khalas" and not "Khalsa". According to them the word 'Khalas' refers to an individual who possesses a pure mind and a spirit and not to the Sikh community, i.e., Khalsa. Further, they argue that the words "Bani Pad Nirbani" used by Sainapat do not refer to Granth Sahib because the word "Uchri" has been used before the aforesaid words and, therefore, the quotation refers to an individual who recites the word of the Guru. But it must be submitted that the Namdharis are only indulging in hair splitting to suit their personal ends. Bhai Nand Lal also supports the version given by Sainapat when he writes in his Rehit-nama :

"He (the guru) had three rupa (forms) — Nirguna, i.e., invisible, Guru Sabda, i.e., the Master's word. The first is *"ek rup tih gun te pare,"* the Supreme Spirit, the formless Great Soul, All Pervading, the Parmatma, of which the human soul is but a small part. The second is Granth ji—the Gur Sabad, the word of the great Gurus incorporated in the holy Granth Sahib—*dusar rup Granth Ji Jan mera rup Granth Ji Jan, is mein bhed nahin kuch man*, i.e., Treat Granth Sahib as my substitute. have no doubt about it. The third *Sargun rupa* or the visible form, is the Sikhs, the Khalsa, absorbed in reciting gurbani day and night"

Moreover, according to promise given by Guru Amar Das to Bibi Bhani, Guruship could devolve only on the family members and not to an outsider whereas none of the two, i.e., Baba Balak Singh and Baba Ram Singh, was related to the Guru.



THE FOUNDER

The Kuka sect was founded by Baba Balak Singh, s/o Dial Singh of Huzroo in Rawalpindi District (Pakistan) in 1847. Baba Balak Singh died in 1863. He, during his life time initiated into his sect Baba Ram Singh who fell under his spell during the period of his service in the army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and urged him to propagate it.

Baba Ram Singh was born in February, 1816 at Village Bhaini in the District of Ludhiana. His father Jassa Singh was a carpenter in his village. Very little is known about the early life of Baba Ram Singh except that he got his early education in Gurmukhi and Gurbani (Sikh scriptures) from his mother. He owed his religious bent of mind to his mother Sada Kaur, who narrated to him the stories from the lives of the Gurus which left an indelible impression on his mind. He was married at the age of 7 years to one Jassan of Village Dharaur of Ludhiana District. He had two daughters, namely Nand Kaur and Daya Kaur.

He spent the first twenty years of his life at his native

Village Bhaini assisting his parents in the family work. When he was about 20, he was prompted by his maternal uncle Kabul Singh, a soldier in Khalsa Army, to get himself enlisted in the army which he joined and served for several years in the Risala of Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh, grandson of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Because of his religious fervour, he developed association with like-minded people like Baba Kahan Singh, who later proved a great asset to him in spreading the Kuka Movement. Maharaja Ranjit Singh died in 1839 and after his death the Sikh army was deeply involved in Royal intrigues and conspiracies which led to general deterioration in moral discipline. In 1841, while on way to Peshawer, Baba Ram Singh came into contact with Baba Balak Singh at Hazru, who was working for reforming the Sikh society to save it from the rot that had sat within it. In 1845, when first Anglo-Sikh war broke out he threw his musket into the Sutlaj and came to his native Village Bhaini, where he took to cultivation and thereafter opened a grocery shop but his chief occupation was meditation and missionary work which was carried on under the inspiration of Baba Balak Singh whom he visited frequently. A large number of people began to flock to him being impressed by his religious personality, besides a large number of his erstwhile colleagues in the Khalsa Army who had come to stay with him.

In 1857, the year of the great Indian Revolt, he founded what he called the Sant Khalsa which became the nucleus of his Namdhari movement. On Baisakhi day that year, he organised a large assembly of his followers at Village Bhaini. He unfurled a triangular white flag and baptised five Sikhs



with Khande da Amrit and enjoined his followers to observe the five K's namely Kes (unshorn hair), Kanga (comb), Kachha (Shorts), Kara (iron bangle), and Kirpan (Sword, which had been disallowed by the government and, therefore, he enjoined the keeping of a lathi in its place). He, in addition to aforesaid, enjoined his disciples to keep a woollen rosary to wear a white dress and to tie a white turban in a peculiar style known as "Sheeda Pug". This gave a uniform external appearance to his disciples, which is a must for enforcing discipline in any organisation. In 1863, he issued a comprehensive code of discipline for his followers which went a long way in consolidating the ranks of the Kuka movement. Kuka membership increased rapidly and Baba Ram Singh undertook extensive tours throughout Punjab. Religious assemblies addressed by him attracted large crowds. As his teachings contained critical references to western influences such as education and justice, his movement attracted British Government's attention. British authorities interpreted this movement as a bid to restore the Khalsa Raj in the Punjab. At one time a suggestion was made by the police that Baba Ram Singh should be arrested but in the absence of any overt acts of disloyalty, the Punjab Government declined to accept this suggestion. Instructions were issued to keep a careful watch on his body and as a result in 1863 Baba Ram Singh and his followers were placed under police surveillance. In June 1863, Baba Ram Singh was interned in his Headquarters at Bhaini under semi-imprisonment conditions. He was not allowed to go out of the village on missionary tours. He was designated as a rebel against the British rule and his followers were termed

as enemies of the State. The British authorities appointed spies and police agents disguised as Kukas at the Headquarters of the movement:

Meanwhile, Baba Ram Singh organised the Kukas into a compact group and developed a well-administered organization. He divided Punjab into 70 *Soobas* through which his lieutenants known as *Soobas* actively itinerated, preaching not only the doctrines of the Kuka sect, but also the speedy restoration of the Khalsa rule and enlisting all the sinews of the Sikh race. According to Dist. Supt. of Police Ferozepur's report, dated 18th March, 1872. Lukka Singh a Sooba of Ram Singh, was always with Ram Singh and thought himself his wazeer. He was constantly stirring up the people to become converts to the Kuka faith, as he said, Ram Singh was about to become king and rule over the North, South, East and West and that the time of two and a half years, two and a half months, and two and a half days was still wanting those, who would not turn, would regret it, and they would not be entertained even as grass cutters.

Looking at the doctrines of the Kooka sect, one finds that in the beginning its object was the reformation of Sikh religion but, however, gradually it assumed a political character. The very titles which Ram Singh assumed mark out this aspect. When first heard of as the successor of Balak Singh of Huzroo he was known as "Ram Singh mahant", afterwards as "Guru Ram Singh", then as "Sat Guru" and later as "Sat Guru Badshah." Baba Ram Singh succeeded in recruiting from higher classes and many leading Sardars and Landlords joined the Kuka movement.

Official repression proved a shot in the arm for the movement which made rapid strides and took the form of political revolutionary organization. The Kukas were asked to boycott British institutions such as schools and colleges, courts, post and telegraph facilities and steps were taken to make alternative arrangements. Ultimately, government withdrew the ban on the activities of Kukas in 1869. This further strengthened the movement and boosted the morale of the Kukas.

According to official reports of that time "Ram Singh is a man of considerable ability and mark and that assisted by his staff of "Soobas" and the prosperity which had hitherto attended him, he is in a position to extend his influence to a dangerous degree."

Baba Ram Singh being a far-sighted leader and an astute organiser and planner had no plan to haphazardly launch any movement against the British. He wanted to seek assistance from the native chiefs and to recruit his followers in the army and police of the native states to standby for the revolt at opportune moment.

But some of his over-zealous followers, in 1871 chalked out a plan in 1871 to attack slaughter houses and butchers with a view to win over the sympathies of Hindu population which abhors slaughter of kine. Suba Gian Singh, a close associate of Baba Ram Singh, master-minded these attacks. Such incidents took place first at Maloud and then at Maler Kotla in 1872. According to official reports, "The attack contemplated by them was resolved on account of the leaving by chance of the Maharaja of Patiala to Delhi,

the headless state of the Riasat of Maler Kotla, its chief having died, and the recent installation of the Rajah of Nabha. They had a consultation among themselves to the effect that they should first overpower the State of Maler-Kotla and securing arms, horses, etc. from that principality, take hold of the Patiala fort of Doladi, and then suddenly attack the Riast of Nabha. They first attacked the Maloud Estate and then fell on Maler Kotla, but had they not been arrested there, their co-religionists would have flown to their assistance from all directions on hearing their attacking the State, but owing to the good management of Mr. Cowan, who exerted himself in collecting the troops of the neighbouring chief and in summoning the British Fauj, and on account of the coming to the place of Mr. Forsyth, they were checked."

In Malerkotla incident, Kukas killed 10 men and wounded seventeen, their own losses being 8 killed and 31 wounded. 68 Kukas were rounded up and out of them 65 were blown up from a canon's mouth and one was cut to pieces by sword. This kind of punishment was inflicted for setting example to others and to terrify the Kukas so that no one might ever raise his head again.

After the Malerkotla incident, the entire Kuka movement was outlawed, a police post was set up at Bhaini, the headquarters of the movement, and all prominent leaders including Baba Ram Singh were taken into custody. Baba Ram Singh was first deported to Allahabad and then to Burma and remained there as a state prisoner till his death in 1885.

Mr. Cowan was dismissed from service and Mr. Forsyth was transferred for their mishandling of the affair. This again boosted the morale of the Kukas who asserted that all this had happened due to a miracle wrought by their Guru. During his exile in Burma, Baba Ram Singh kept contacts with his followers in Punjab through letters and personal messengers. In these letters and messages he predicted that they would soon be free from the yoke of the ferangis (Britishers). He also wrote a letter to the Russian Government seeking its help against the British but the letter and reply thereof carried by a Sooba fell into the hands of a spy who handed them over to the British. The British Government became more cautious and watched his activities with greater care. He was transferred from Rangoon to a solitary place in the island of Margui where he died in 1885. The Kuka movement thereafter remained a living force but it never again reached the popularity it had gained under the brilliant leadership of Baba Ram Singh.



THEIR SUB-SECTS AND SPLINTERS

Baba Ram Singh, the founder of Namdhari sect, was the first illustrious son of Punjab, the land of five rivers, who after the annexation of Punjab by the British in 1849, attempted to organise a revolt against the foreign rule, when an atmosphere of helplessness, despondency and frustration was prevailing amongst the larger section of the Sikh people.

According to a despatch of Lord Dalhousie the political existence of the Sikhs as a nation had been put to an end after the annexation. Baba Ram Singh, who was earlier a soldier in the artillery wing of the Khalsa army which fought against the British, had in him the fire of faith worked with enthusiasm and determination to rekindle and revive the by-gone glory of Khalsa Panth. With this object, he started a religio-socio-political movement, known as Namdhari movement, in April 1857. His dynamic personality and sincere teachings coupled with his exemplary personal life, energised his followers and attracted a large number of

adherents. The movement reached its climax in 1872, when 67 Kuka prisoners were put to death by having been blown away with guns at Malerkotla by the British officers — Mr. Cowan, the Deputy Commissioner of Ludhiana, and Mr. Forsyth, the Commissioner, Ambala, for the offence of murdering the butchers. Baba Ram Singh and some other principal leaders of the Kuka movement were deported and all others of influence who remained were put under surveillance.

With sudden increase in his following, Baba Ram Singh came to be called Guru Ram Singh by the most fanatic amongst his adherents. This caused the first split in the movement because, according to Sikh belief, personal Guruship came to an end with Guru Gobind Singh who had directed the Sikhs to treat Guru Granth Sahib alone as their Guru after him. As a result, a large number of Kukas left the Namdhari sect founded by Baba Ram Singh.

Lieut. Col. J. Fendall in his letter No., 175, dated 6th April, 1872 written to Lieut. Col. C.H. Hall, Offg. Commr. and Supdt. Amritsar Division, narrates how important Kukas were defecting from the sect and denouncing Baba Ram Singh as an imposter. These included Hari Singh of Singhpura, Zaildar of Dera Nanak Circle, and his two sons, Narain Singh and Sham Singh. Hari Singh was one of the Naib Subas appointed by Baba Ram Singh. Besides them, the others who defected, were Kartar Singh Bedi, one of Ram Singh's Subas and four other Bedis, namely Amer Singh, Ganda Singh, Partap Singh and Jagir Singh.

According to Lieut. Col. Fendall's aforesaid letter, "These eight men, some of them of great social influence and

all men of mark, have thus in the most solemn and public manner abjured Kukaism and denounced Ram Singh as an imposter."

After Baba Ram Singh, his younger brother, Hari Singh, succeeded him as leader of the movement. He was a cool-headed man capable of making plans and directing their execution. He possessed talent to organise men for a cause. He continued the struggle against the Britishers by strengthening the non-cooperation and non-violent movements, which were later adopted by the Congress leaders. "In their search for some effective political programme of action for the Indian masses, the leaders of the Indian National Congress, especially late Rashtrapati Rajendra Prasad, carefully studied the political ideas, and practices of the Kuka community. He was much impressed by their simple and clear-cut programme. He brought this to the notice of Gandhiji. Gandhiji adopted the boycott and the use of Swadeshi or Khadi from the Kuka line of action."

Sardar Hari Singh was a true democrat. He removed all distinctions of high and low among his Sikhs. He wore the same cloth as his poor followers used to wear. He used to take his meals in common Langer (kitchen) along with hundreds of his followers. All this kept the adherents of the Namdhari faith united.

Though during the period of Baba Hari Singh, the movement remained peaceful, yet Bhaini Sahib (Head quarters of the Namdharis) remained a volcano in the eyes of the British Government. Many a time Bhaini Sahib was searched and many Kukas were arrested and sentenced. A

big picket of police was posted at the front gate of Bhaini Sahib. Baba Hari Singh thus, with his saintly personality, consolidated the movement launched by Baba Ram Singh and infused new enthusiasm amongst his co-religionists who were wavering.

Baba Hari Singh had three sons. The eldest was Maharaj Nihal Singh, the second one was Maharaj Gurdial Singh and the youngest one was Maharaj Partap Singh. After the death of Baba Hari Singh, his youngest son, Maharaj Partap Singh, who was then living with Baba Hari Singh and was in charge of the Langer (common kitchen) during the life time of Baba Hari Singh, succeeded him as head of the Namdhari sect. This resulted in a split in the Kuka movement, because while Maharaj Nihal Singh and his younger brother, Maharaj Gurdial Singh, were staunch Congressites, Maharaj Partap Singh had pro-British inclinations. That was a time when many forces of freedom were springing up in the Punjab. The British were keeping a close watch and tried to suppress them in their infancy.

Maharaj Partap Singh lacked the revolutionary zeal and determination of his ancestors and, therefore, preferred to keep aloof from anti-British movements. He tried to patch up with the British bureaucracy. He participated in horse races along with British officials to develop personal friendship with them. On the other hand, the other two brothers Maharaj Nihal Singh and Maharaj Gurdial Singh, remained anti-British and worked zealously for the Indian National Congress.

During the war of 1940, Maharaj Partap Singh raised.

war fund to help the British Government. In all the Darbars held by the British in the Ludhiana District, Maharaj Partap Singh contributed to the war fund, much against the pleading of the Congress and the Namdhari ideology. He even tried to organise a Kuka regiment, through Rai Bahadur Buta Singh, to help the British in fighting the war but his plan failed due to active opposition by his brothers, Maharaj Nihal Singh and Maharaj Gurdial Singh. These two revolutionaries stopped Namdharis from going astray from the path of nationalism. The two were present in the Jallianwala Bagh at the time of ghastly massacre of 1919 and were brought out to safety by their Kuka associates who were standing thereby.

After the tragedy of Jallianwala Bagh, Maharaj Nihal Singh and Maharaj Gurdial Singh continued to hold political conferences under the banner of Congress along with Dr. Kitchlew, Dr. Satya Pal and others. Due to these activities Mr. Asgar Ali, Deputy Commissioner of Ludhiana, summoned all the three brothers and warned them of serious consequences if the two brothers namely Maharaj Nihal Singh and Maharaj Gurdial Singh did not stop their anti-British activities. But the aforesaid two refused to recant. Thus, the split in the Namdhari movement widened and at the Amritsar Congress Session which was held after the tragedy of Jallianwala Bagh, while Maharaj Nihal Singh and Maharaj Gurdial Singh attended it as important leaders, their brother, Maharaj Partap Singh who was head of the Namdhari sect, refused to co-operate and attend it.

Maharaj Gurdial Singh and his associate Sant Nidhan Singh Alam were elected delegates of the Indian National

Congress for several years. But Maharaj Gurdial Singh died at a young age, about six months before the historic Lahore session of the Indian National Congress in 1919. Maharaj Nihal Singh attended the Congress Session at Lahore with a few hundred Kukas and joined the procession with all that followers riding the horses. However, Maharaj Partap Singh directed his followers to boycott the Congress Session.

In 1930 during the Civil Disobedience Movement launched by the Congress, Maharaj Nihal Singh, alongwith a few Kukas, courted arrest but majority of the Kukas at the instance and advice of Maharaj Partap Singh kept aloof. Sardar Atma Singh, son of Rai Bahadur Boota Singh, an influential Kuka leader and an adherent of Maharaj Partap Singh, openly opposed the Namdhari's participation. However, in the later years Maharaj Partap Singh also patched up with the Congress.

During the first general election held after independence in 1952, Sardar Atma Singh was allotted Congress ticket from the Sirsa-Fazilka constituency and was elected a member of the Indian Parliament with the active support of Maharaj Partap Singh. But the differences between the two brothers, Maharaj Partap Singh and Maharaj Nihal Singh, continued and Maharaj Nihal Singh, who after independence settled in Delhi, organised his followers under the organisation of Kuka Dal which brought out pamphlets from time to time exposing the anti-Congress activities of Maharaj Partap Singh. Maharaj Nihal Singh was repeatedly made a member of the Rajya Sabha because of his old association with the Congress Party.

A still more serious rift occurred amongst the Namdharis after independence which continues till today and has divided the Namdharis into two camps of almost equal strength. About one year prior to the partition, Maharaj Partap Singh informed Namdharis that the country was going to be partitioned and they would have to migrate to Eastern Punjab. He, therefore, proposed that all of them should jointly purchase a few villages in East Punjab and settle there so that it might not only enhance their political influence but also avoid the risk of pre-emption suits which were so common during those days because when the whole village was purchased in one name there would be no co-sharer left to file the pre-emption suit.

Accordingly, a sum of Rs. two lakh was collected from the disciples and with this amount Kanjarwala (now Damdama), Alipur, Jagmalera, Chauchal etc. contiguous villages in Sirsa Tehsil were purchased. He promised that although the sale deed would be executed and registered in the name of Maharaj Partap Singh, the land would be subsequently distributed amongst the Namdharis in proportion to the amount contributed by them towards the sale price.

But after independence dispute arose on the point of distribution of land. A large number of Namdharis, led by Sant Ghasita Singh who was once Mukhtar-ul-um of Maharaj Partap Singh, rebelled against their spiritual head and demanded fair distribution of land. This led to litigation in the civil courts between the rebels and Maharaj Partap Singh. Sant Ghasita Singh's following started increasing as he also enjoyed political patronage of Giani Kartar Singh

and Choudhery Devi Lal.

The climax of this split in the Namdharis came when Sant Ghasita Singh was murdered on 2-7-1958 and five persons, including Maharaj Bir Singh, son of Maharaj Partap Singh, were arrested and tried for this murder. It was alleged by the prosecution that the four assailants were led to the place of crime by Maharaj Bir Singh. However, the learned Session Judge of Ferozepur, Mr. Bihari Lal Goswami, who decided the case, honourably acquitted Maharaj Bir Singh of the charge and observed that he had been falsely implicated.

However, the split in the Namdhari camp continues till today, although it has lost its momentum due to saintly and sober personality of Baba Jagjit Singh who is the present head of the sect. Maharaj Partap Singh had died soon after the decision of the aforesaid case. Baba Jagjit Singh who is now about 55 years old, has almost always sided with the Congress except once when Choudhery Devi Lal contested for the State Assembly on the Congress ticket from Ellenabad constituency. Baba Jagjit Singh sponsored and supported an independent candidate, Choudhery Lal Chand, against him and, as a result, Choudhery Devi Lal was defeated.

Baba Jagjit Singh has done some constructive work to bring modernity to the people of his sect. He has started educational institutions in his villeges and has got constructed private pucca roads to enable the farmers to carry their crops direct to the market. He has been President of the Punjab and Haryana States' Peace Council and is a

member of the World Council of Peace.

A sub-sect of the Namdharis sprang up just before the partition led by Sant Harnam Singh of Naushehra Majha Singh. The followers of this sub-sect rever Baba Ram Singh, the founder of the Kuka sect, but they have developed their own distinctive uniforms and festivals, besides the mode of worship.

Sant Harnam Singh belongs to a rich Khatri family and was baptised into Kuka sect by Sant Jamiat Singh. He had a religious bent of mind from his early childhood and he meditated at Bhaini Sahib by having Samadhi in open place at cold nights and near fire in summer. He thereafter returned to his native village, Qilla Sooba Singh in Sialkot district, proclaiming that he had attained enlightenment. His parents were money-lenders, but he returned all the ornaments pledged with them and tore off the documents executed by the debtors. This made him popular amongst the people who started revering him as a saint. He soon started delivering *Gurmantar*, the ceremony of baptising into Kuka sect, and achieved the status of a spiritual head amongst his followers. He started ignoring the successors of Baba Ram Singh and organised his own congregations.

While the original Namdharis wear white dresses i. e. kurta, pyjama and the turban, Sant Harnam Singh has enjoined his followers to wear a blue turban tied in a peculiar style. He has further enjoined them to wear a blue *Kamarkasa* (waist-band). His adherents carry a "Sela" (a kind of hook to dig ground for casing) and a brass pot. He

is particularly popular amongst the women folk. Although Sant Harnam Singh himself denies to himself the status of a guru, yet at all congregations he is the object of worship even in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib. He claims to be a married Brahmchari. He has two wives but claims to be a celibate person and has no children.

But there is not a complete break between the two types of aforesaid Namdharis and there are many amongst them who pay their reverence to both the heads. This new sub-sect has its branches now in Bombay, Singapore and even Bangkok, besides various places in Punjab.

Thus, although Namdhari movement is splitting rapidly, yet there seems to be no possibility of its withering away completely in the near future.

NAMDHARI ARDAS

Etymologically, the word Ardas has been derived from the word "arzdasht" which means petition. Thus, an Ardas is a petition asking for what one desires from God.

Ardas is an important part of all activities of the Sikhs. No ceremony, whether religious or secular, is complete without a prayer. Before going on a journey or opening a shop or occupying a new house, a short prayer must be said.

Once some Sikhs went to Guru Amar Das and asked him about the favourable time for starting anything new. The Guru replied: "The most favourable time for Guru's Sikhs is when they pray to God. If at the beginning of all undertakings, they, with humility invoke God's assistance, all their efforts will meet success."

According to Dubistan-i-Mazahab, when anybody wanted his wish to be fulfilled by God, he would come to an assembly of Sikhs and ask them to pray for him. Even Guruji requested his Sikhs to pray for him.

Namdharis, like all other Sikhs, say prayer on all occasions, i.e. religious, social as well as political. The diction and style of Namdhari prayer is also the same as the popular Sikh prayer but it differs materially from the Sikh prayer in contents.

The Sikh prayer may be divided into three parts :-

- (i) Six lines of verse by Guru Gobind Singh invoking God and the first nine Gurus.**
- (ii) From line 7 to line 25, rhythmic prose, narrating the various events of Sikh history.**
- (iii) Personal prayer expressing the desires and wishes of individuals or group of individuals saying the prayer.**

The first six lines are common to both the Sikh prayer as well as the Namdhari prayer. But after that, the Sikh prayer, after invocation to Guru Gobind Singh, refers to Guru Granth Sahib. As the Namdharis do not recognise Granth Sahib to be the Guru, therefore, they instead continue with the mention of the line of living Gurus, i.e., Balak Singh, Ram Singh, Hari Singh, Partap Singh and Jagjit Singh. It is because the Namdharis believe that the line of living Gurus did not end with Guru Gobind Singh and that Baba Balak Singh was appointed the eleventh Guru by Guru Gobind Singh himself.

The Sikhs in the 12th line of their prayer recite: "Those who in order to purge the Sikh shrines of long-standing evils, suffered themselves to be ruthlessly beaten or to be imprisoned, to be shot, cut up or burnt alive with kerosene

oil but did not offer any resistance or utter even a sigh of complaint, think of their patient faith and call on God, the wonderful Lord."

These lines refer to the Akali movement launched by the Sikhs for bringing about reform in their shrines that had fallen into the hands of the guardians of ill-repute known as Mahants. Namdharis omit these lines from their prayer. It is because Akalis, as puritans amongst the Sikhs, always condemn the claims of the heads of Namdhari sect to personal Guruship as successors of Guru Gobind Singh. Instead, the Namdhari prayer mentions the names of numerous Kukas who attained martyrdom - cheerfully mounted the gallows or were blown off with guns.

Namdharis also omit the 13th line of the Sikh prayer which calls upon the Sikhs to think of all the different gurdwaras, thrones of religious authority and other places hallowed by the touch of Guru's feet. Similarly, they do not invoke the blessings of Granth Sahib. On the other hand, the Namdharis prayer frequently mentions the Gurus in flesh and blood who, according to the Namdharis' are successors of Guru Gobind Singh. They invoke the presence of Baba Ram Singh in their midst, for they believe that he is not dead. While the Sikhs conclude their prayer with the words "Nanak Nam Chardi Kala.....," the Namdhari conclude with the words "Ram Singh Nam Chardi Kala......"

The mode of prayer prevalent amongst the Namdharis is the same as amongst the Sikhs.

It is congregational in character and is free from

ritualism. There is no priestly class amongst them as well, and anybody can lead the prayer provided he knows it. But while saying their prayer the Sikhs always face Guru Granth Sahib, the Namdharis face their living Guru if he is present there; otherwise, they face the person who leads the prayer.

However, the Namdhari prayer can't be termed as "un-Sikh like " The Sikh Gurus were liberal in prescribing the contents of prayer. Therefore, they left a lot of scope for the individual offering prayer to be free with its contents as he proceeds. After the composition of the Guru, he has a chance to try his free hand in expressing his thoughts or the ideas of the whole congregation. However, Namdharis must learn to pay due respect to Granth Sahib which enshrines the teachings of the ten Gurus whose Guruship they do not deny.



THE FORE-RUNNERS FOR INDIA'S FREEDOM

Whether the Kuka Movement was religious or political is a subject of controversy for historians. According to one school of thought, the Kuka Movement was a political rebellion against the British rule in India to restore the Khalsa Raj. The other school, led by Dr. Ganda Singh, doubts the political character of Kuka Movement and asserts that Malerkotla and Malaudh incidents were only stray ones. The reason for this confusion is that amongst the Sikhs, religion and politics are intermingled. It is impossible to separate such movements from political objectives.

Baba Ram Singh was a soldier in the Sikh army. He fought against the British at Mudki but when the battle was lost, he threw his musket in the river and crossed it to reach his home in village Bhaini, Ludhiana district, so that he could fight the battle at the time and place of his choice.

To know the real character of Kuka Movement, one may quote J.P. Warburton, an English senior police officer

who had a close acquaintance with the Kuka sect from the beginning of 1872. He wrote in 1896 :

"I am satisfied that the political aspirations of the sect, their hostility towards the ruling power and their capacity and disposition of seriously disturbing the public peace are still harboured, though in a latent form. The inflammable material exists in abundance and needs only a spark to ignite it."

"The truth is" writes the author of Ludhiana district Gazetteer 1904, *"that it is not possible for a Kuka to be a loyal subject of the British Government."*

To study the character of the movement, one may study in detail the strategy of its leaders. The plan adopted was two-fold : firstly, non-cooperation with the British, and secondly, secret preparation for a confrontation.

Discussing the first aspect, Prof. Harbans Singh, in his scholarly book, 'The Heritage of the Sikhs', writes:—

"Baba Ram Singh was never reconciled to the rule of the British. His prediction about its early recession was implicitly believed by his followers who were forbidden to join government service, to go to the courts of law or learn English language. The movement thus gained a political bias. Its chief inspiration was, in fact, derived from opposition to the foreign rule and everything tending to remind one of it was shunned. English education, mill-made cloth, and other imported goods were boycotted. In its advocacy of the use of Swadeshi,

the Kuka Movement forestalled, in the sixties of the last century, an important feature of the nationalist struggle under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi "

A secret line of communication is a basic pre-requisite of any underground movement aimed at an armed revolt. Almost all the books on Kuka history make a mention of Kuka postal system but none explains it clearly. It was not merely a separate postal system meant for the Kukas, as it was not open to use by the ordinary Kukas. In fact it was a secret line of communication used for transmitting secret information, generally in oral tradition, among the members of the volunteer force. As is usual with such communication lines, this system also was manned by volunteers, especially earmarked for keeping the line working. The Punjab Government, in a letter No. 157-54, dated February 2, 1867, reported about the Kuka postal system to the Government of India in the following words :

"The 'Kukas' or as they are sometimes called the 'Sant Khalsas', have a private post of their own which appears to be admirably organised. Confidential letters are circulated much in the same way, as the fiery cross was carried through by a highland clan in Scottish by-gone days. A Kuka, on arrival at the village of another of the same sect with a despatch, at once leaves off whatever work he may be engaged upon; if in midst of a repast, not another morsel is eaten; he asks no questions, but taking the message starts off at a run and covers it to the next relief, or to his destination. Important communications are sent verbally and are not committed to writing. In carrying messages, they

are, said Major Perkins, to make great detours, to avoid the Grand Trunk Road."

Mr. Donovan, an Englishman, a railway employee of Doraha (near Ludhiana). reported about 'Kuka postal system' to the Governor-General in these words.—

"...their strict order is not to exchange a syllable with any individual whilst conveying things "

The words "confidential letters", leaving off even in the midst of a repast, asking no question, "exchange not a syllable whilst conveying things". all clearly show that this postal system was in fact a secret line of communication for a revolutionary political movement. The courier receiving the message does not ask any question. Then how does he know as to where he has to carry the message? On a communication line of this nature, each leg of the journey is predetermined.

Further, the underground character of the movement is exposed by the fact that chosen Kuka volunteers were given training in the art of bearing arms, at night around Bhaini Sahib. Ways and means to procure arms in time of need were devised. Political indoctrination was carried on through a network of subas, naibsubas, jathedars and granthis. With a view to giving them better training in the use of arms, Baba Ram Singh asked his followers to enlist themselves in police and army. Since they were not to serve under the British and as the English were also unlikely to recruit them, a solution was sought by arranging the enlistment of Kukas in the armies of native States.

In November 1869, reports were received by the government that the Maharaja of Kashmir was raising Kuka regiment and that each recruit received a certificate from Baba Ram Singh before setting out for Kashmir. In October, 1870, a batch of 20 Kuka recruits was noticed on their way to Kashmir and information reached the government that the Kuka battalion numbered from 200 to 250 strong. From the confidential reports sent to the Inspector-General of Police by various district officers, we learn as under :—

“In 1868 Sardar Hira Singh, a jagirdar of Sudowrah in Saharanpur district and one of Baba Ram Singh's Mahants and subas, went by direction of Baba Ram Singh to Jammu to meet the Maharaja who gave him leave to enlist a regiment of Kookas and appointed him to command it in subordination to Colonel Hukam Singh. Sardar Hira Singh then returned to Bhaini Sahib and obtained Baba Ram Singh's permission to take 175 Kookas with him at once to Jammu. These men were drilled in the use of arms. When they were on parade, arms were supplied to them but they were required to deposit them back into store when the manoeuvres were over.”

On receiving information about the recruitment of Kukas, the government got alarmed. The Inspector-General of Police, Punjab, observed: “It is obviously not to the advantage of my government that a religious leader should possess the opportunity of passing his disciples through the ranks of regiments from which they can desert whenever their spiritual guide may consider their temporal aid necessary to forward his political aims. Provided the service, a large number of Kukas may be drilled and disciplined, to a

certain extent, in foreign armies, without any of the risks which accompany such proceedings in British territory, and it is certain that they remove themselves by enlisting under native princes very effectively from any close espionage."

But this regiment was later disbanded by the Maharaja on the advice of Diwan Kirpa Ram that it served no useful purpose, as tenets of the Kukas were opposed to Hindu religion. The dismissal order read : "Now that intelligence has been received of the murders of butchers by men of this sect, the Maharaja has commended the foresight of Diwan Kirpa Ram, and has ordered all Kookas to be dismissed who are now employed in Muzaffarabad, Gilgit, etc." The dominant reason for disbanding the regiment, therefore, appears to be that the Maharaja was afraid to face the wrath of the British rulers.

Baba Ram Singh also tried to seek help from the Maharaja of Nepal. The contacts of Nepal with the Sikhs were very old and cordial. In 1870 there were 16 Sikhs in the employment of Nepal Darbar. When Rani Jindan was banished to Banaras, she escaped to Nepal and the British Government did not ask for her extradition as it knew that the request would not be acceded to. Baba Ram Singh sent two mules and two buffaloes to Rana of Nepal as a gift through his subas, Kahn Singh and Sahib Singh. On their return, the Rana sent through them a horse, two khukhries with golden tops, a rosary of kasturi and some pieces of cloth as a present for Baba Ram Singh. The object of Baba Ram Singh was to get Kukas recruited to Nepal's army and

thus, provide them training in the use of arms. But this effort did not meet with success as the policy of the Darbar in Nepal was not to recruit non-Gurkhas under its service.

Contacts with Russia

The Russian expansion in Central Asia after 1860 and the British desire to acquire a foothold in Afghanistan in a bid to protect their Indian Empire resulted in strained Anglo-Russian relations. Russians employed some Indians to supply them information about British strength in India and about the discontented large groups of Indian people so that this internal unrest could be exploited. The Russians occupied Tashkent in 1865 and Samarkand in 1868. Baba Ram Singh's words that he was 'driving' the Russians this way appear to be a consequence of Russian conquest of Tashkent which had considerably reduced distance between Indian and Russian forces in Central Asia.

Gurcharan Singh, a Kuka Suba, served as a medium of communication between the Russian administrators in Central Asia and the disaffected Kukas. A recently discovered document preserved in the Archives of Uzbek Socialist Soviet Republic bearing the title, "The ambassador from the priest of the Punjab Sikhs arrives in Samarkand (1879)" contains the letters in original carried by Gurcharan Singh to the Russian court as well as a copy of the reply sent through him. It brings to light concrete evidence on the earnest efforts made by the Kuka patriots to secure Russian aid in liberating their country from the English rulers at the opportune moment of Anglo-Afghan war 1878-80) and

illustrates at the same time that Gurcharan Singh was a forerunner of many other wellknown Indian revolutionaries from Rash Bihari Bose to Subhas Chandra Bose.

Kuka movement, therefore, essentially was a movement for the freedom of the country from the British rule. Kukas had a political wing as well as a political objective and to call it a religious movement alone is unjust. It marked a significant stage in the development of national awareness in the country. It gave a rude jolt to the British rule in India. It aroused a spirit of fanatical national fervour and enthusiasm amongst the Sikhs.



NAMDHARI RAHIT MARYADA

The death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh on 27th of June, 1839 left Punjab without a second man to come to the helm of affairs. Just after about 10 years i.e. on 14th March, 1849, the Sikh soldiers had to lay down their arms at Rawalpindi and Lord Dalhousie, the Governor General of India, proclaimed the annexation of the Punjab. The causes of the collapse of the Sikh kingdom were mutual jealousies,² intrigues, treachery, treason and murders. Religious and social degradation had affected the vitality and sound flow of political life. Summing up the situation, S. Khasbwant Singh writes :

The most important effect of annexation was the new relationship between the Sikhs and the Hindus. It has already been noted that from the time Khalsa became a political power, large numbers of Hindus, who had looked upon it as the spearhead of Hinduism, had nominally accepted the *Pahul* (baptism). During the Sikh rule the distinction between Sikh and Hindu became one of mere form; the Khalsa wore their hair and beards unshorn, the Hindus did

not. For the rest, Brahmanical Hinduism had come back into its own. The new Sikh Jat nobility aped the practices of Hindu Rajput princes; they worshipped Hindu gods alongside their own Granth, venerated the cow, went on pilgrimages to Hindu holy places, fed Brahmins, consulted astrologers and sooth-sayers and compelled widows to immolate themselves on the funeral pyres of their husbands. Among certain sections, notably the *Bedis*, the caste to which Guru Nanak belonged, the practice of killing female children on birth had been revived.

As soon as power passed out of Sikh hands, large numbers of Hindus who had adopted the practices of the Khalsa abandoned them to return to orthodox Hinduism. With them went a considerable number of those who had been Khalsa for several generations. In the two short visits that Lord Dalhousie made to the Punjab he was able to detect this tendency. "Their Great Gooroo Govind sought to abolish caste and in a great degree succeeded," noted the Governor General. "They are, however, gradually relapsing into Hindooism; and even when they continue Sikhs, they are yearly Hindooified more and more; so much so, that Mr. (now Sir) Geo Clark (Governor of Bombay 1847-48) used to say that in 50 years the sect of the Sikhs will have disappeared. There does not seem to be warrant for this view, though it is much more likely now than six months ago."

Advent of the new political and social order, brought

to the forefront some Sikh reformists who felt concerned about this rot that had set in. Some useful work was done by Baba Dayal, founder of the Nirankari movement. This movement was started against the induction of Hindu religious practices into the Sikh system of worship and it tried to keep the spirit of Sikhism alive despite the influence of Brahminism and priesthood that was trying to absorb it.

Some useful work was also done by Bhagat Jawahar Mal and Baba Balak Singh, the divine master of Baba Ram Singh. Due to their practice to continuously recite the name of God while keeping alive to their surrounding socio-political environment, they came to be known as *Abhiast-Jagiasi*. However, the total impact of their endeavours on the society was not much and the rot continued as before.

Baba Ram Singh, who after meeting Baba Balak Singh in 1841 at Hazro became one of his disciples and missionaries started a missionary centre at Bhaini Sahib in District Ludhiana which became the original headquarters of the Namdharis. Baba Ram Singh was of firm view that the real cause of the degradation amongst the Sikhs and the loss of their independence was the fall of moral and spiritual values. Baba Ram Singh believed that the only way open to the Sikhs to stage a come back and regain their lost independence and glory was to fearlessly tread the path chalked out for them by Guru Gobind Singh. He, therefore, preached strict adherence to the code of conduct laid down by Guru Gobind Singh. He wanted his disciples to be ethically strict followers of Guru Govind Singh and not a separate Sikh sect. But the Sikh *Rahit Maryada* (life rules)

which may also be called as organisational imperatives are not a part of the *Adi Granth* but is a development of the era of the tenth Guru and the period following his final institutionalisation of Sikhism in its present form. These life rules have a profound moral content alongwith organisational duties and imperatives. These rules have been described in *Rahitnamas* written by some disciples of the Gurus after the death of Guru Gobind Singh. The need for such an exposition was not felt during the life time of the Gurus as their physical presence more than made up the need for a system.

The origin and validity of some of the *Rahitnamas* is claimed on the basis of their having been dictated by the tenth Guru. Five such *Rahitnamas* are *Tankhah Nama* by Nand Lal and, *Prashan Utter* by Bhai Nand Lal and *Rahit Nama* of Bhai Desa Singh, *Rahitnama* by Chopra Singh and *Rahitnama* by Prehlad Singh. There is considerable difference of opinion amongst the scholars as to the origin and validity of these *Rahitnamas*.

Ernest Trumpp rejects the authenticity of these *Rahitnamas*. In his words, "These injunctions are laid down in a number of so called *Rahitnamas* or books of conduct, which all pretend to have been dictated by the Guru himself, but none of which appear to be genuine, since they vary greatly, and were, as may be easily proven, all composed after the death of the Guru, some of them as late as the end of the last century. They cannot, therefore, be considered a direct testimony of what Govind Singh himself ordained and introduced into Khalsa, but only as an evid-

ence of the later development of Sikhism.”

This variance in the texts of various *Rahitnamas* facilitated the task of Baba Ram Singh to prescribe certain rituals and injunctions which are even against the teachings of the tenth Guru. However, it cannot be denied that the code laid down by Baba Ram Singh for his disciples in its core was inspired by the teachings of Guru Gobind Singh which perhaps Baba Ram Singh could not properly appreciate and understand due to lack of scholarship.

Sikh *Rahit Maryada* consists of two parts. One part consists of organisational imperatives and the second one consists of moral duties. Baba Ram Singh adopted the fundamental duties as enjoined by Guru Gobind Singh to build up an organisation of the Sikhs to face the heavy odds of the time. He made use of the same technique, the same method and the same principles for meeting the challenge before him as Guru Gobind Singh had prescribed about one and a half centuries earlier.

Baba Ram Singh, therefore, administered *Khande da Amrit* (nectar of the sword) to his disciples at the baptism ceremony. This is significant because at that time the practice prevalent amongst the holy men who claimed Guruship was to administer nectar of their foot washing i.e. *Charan Amrit* to their disciples. But while Guru Gobind Singh had stood up before the five beloved ones with folded hands and took baptism from them, so that he might become one with them, Baba Ram Singh did not repeat this precedent, may be because he already considered himself to be one of them. The names of the first five to be baptised by Baba Ram

Singh on the Baisakhi of 1857 are :-

1. **Bhai Kahn Singh Nihang, Village Chak, Malerkotla State**
2. **Bhai Labh Singh, Amritsar**
3. **Bhai Naina Singh Wariyah, Amritsar District**
4. **Bhai Atma Singh, Village Ala Muhar, District Sialkot**
5. **Bhai Sudh Singh, Village Durgapur, District Jullundur**

Baba Ram Singh enjoined his disciples to observe the discipline of the five "K's" as prescribed by Guru Gobind Singh but as the wearing of kirpan had been disallowed by the Government, a heavy lathi was prescribed by Baba Ram Singh as a substitute for a sword.

Some more rules of conduct prescribed by Baba Ram Singh are found in the letters addressed by him to his disciples in India when he was imprisoned in Burma. These rules may be summarised as under :-

"A kuka or Namdhari should wake up at about 2 O'clock in the morning. He should go out for a walk. Having been to the toilet, he should wash his hands seven times with either sand or ash or earth. He should clean his teeth with a branch of *Kikar* or *Neem tree*. He should take some exercise also. He should take his bath either with well water or in a holy tank or a canal. He should take a complete bath daily, *Puran Ishnan* i.e. washing from head to foot. After tak-

ing his bath, a Namdhari should change his clothes every day. He should wear white clothes and tie a white Sheeda pug i.e. turban tied in a straight manner. Thereafter, he should sit on a silky or woolen white sheet to meditate on the name of God. Then he should attend the congregation at the Gurdwara and listen to the Asa Di Var i.e. the hymns composed by Guru Nank. While sitting in the congregation he should meditate with the help of a necklace of knots made in a white woolen cord i.e. a 108 head woolen rosary. After the service at the Gurdwara is over, every one is free to do his professional duties. In the evening again a Namdhari should say his evening prayer."

A Namdhari is specifically prohibited from removing of hair, adultery and use of tobacco. But while according to Sikh code of conduct, one is prohibited from eating meat prepared by the process of gradual and painful slaughter of the animal (*Kutah*), a Namdhari has been absolutely prohibited from eating any type of meat. Namdharis are enjoined to eat strictly vegetarian food.

While Sikhism refuses to accredit the caste institution in social ethics and its seers, Namdharis still adhere to caste classification. Guru Gobind Singh after baptising the first five Sikhs had delivered them the following sermon :—

"I wish you all to embrace one creed and follow one path, obliterating all differences of religion. Let the four Hindu castes alone, which have different rules laid down for them, abandon them altogether and

adopting the way of co-operation, mix freely with one another. Let no one deem himself superior to another. Do not follow the old Purans. Let none visit the Ganges and other places of pilgrimage which are considered holy according to the Hindu religion or adore Hindu deities, but all should believe in Guru Nank and his successors. Let men of the four castes receive my baptism, eat out of the same vessel and feel no disgust or contempt for one another."

But Baba Jagjit Singh, present pontiff of the Namdharis' refused to accept edibles from Captain Bhag Singh, an *Amritdhari Gursikh* and editor of the *Sikh Review* Calcutta, on the ground that he does not take edibles from the home of any body who is not a Namdhari. He told Captain Bhag Singh :—

"By eating together, equality can never be achieved. It is the union of souls that merits. Till now none of the prophets or Gurus has been *Samwarti* though many had been *Samdarst*."

When Captain Bhag Singh told Baba Jagjit Singh that Guru Gobind Singh had shunned casteism amongst the Sikhs after their baptism, Baba Ji replied :—

"Can you name any of the five baptised persons (*Panj Piaras*) who were not having relation of *roti* and *beti*, i.e., was there any person among the *Piaras* who was a *Mazhabi* or a *Chamar*?"

Thus Namdharis are even till today circumventing

and subverting the basic teachings of the Sikh Gurus by perpetuating casteism, which had been so vehemently condemned by the Sikh Gurus. The first of the Sikhs baptised into the order of the Khalsa, also included those Hindus who, according to the *varna* theory, belonged to the lower castes. The theory of separate duties for different castes was replaced by the same ethical and religious duties for all men. Thus the fundamental equality of all men was ensured by free and voluntary admission to the order of the Khalsa. To wipe out the worst type of social discrimination based on caste, the Sikh Gurus started the institution of *Sangat* and *Pangat*. By virtue of these two institutions, rich and poor, high and low, Brahmin and sweeper, men and women, all were made to sit together, pray together and dine together. With a view to show that men born among *Shudras* could rise to intense spiritual heights, Guru Arjun included, in the *Granth Sahib*, the compositions of Ravi Das, Nam Dev, etc. who were regarded of low caste by the Hindus. This was the most practical way of securing the highest honour for them because the book in which their writings found place was regarded divine by the Sikhs and was held in high esteem. Further, to break through the orthodox Hindu practice of considering food, drink touched by a person of lower caste as polluted, Guru Gobind Singh made people of different castes drink *Amrit* out of a common bowl. Guru Gobind Singh himself set a fine example of *Samwari* in accepting *Amrit* at the hands of *Panj Piras*. Namdharis' practice, therefore, of not having social contacts with non-Namdhari Sikhs is clearly against the tenets of Sikhism.

Kuka marriage is another distinctive feature of the Namdhari way of life. Unlike other Sikhs, Namdharis are

forbidden to have their marriage ceremonies conducted at home. They are required to marry at a religious fair in the presence of the Pontiff. A mass marriage ceremony is arranged where several couples undergo the ritual at the same time.

“According to Namdhari principles, five men sit near a fire, called the Havna. They read hymns written by various Gurus and prescribed for the purpose. A sixth man puts a mixture of saffron, musk, sandalwood powder, sugar, ghee and about fifteen other such things into the fire, while a seventh sprinkles water on the fire, after every short intervals. This lasts for about an hour or a little less. Thus the Havna is performed before the ceremony. After that either another batch of five men or the same five sit aside near an open-mouthed iron pot, which has a two-edged sword called Kbanda in it. A little sugar and water is put in this pot and the four men read the sacred hymns while one person moves the Kbanda in that sweet water very slowly. This ceremony takes about half an hour and divine *Amrit* or nectar is ready to be given to the couple.

The couple takes a bath early in the morning and is brought to the congregation where the *Asa Di Var* is being sung. Both the bride and the bride-groom are dressed in white. Before she sits on the left side of her fiancé, the bride puts a woollen rosary around his neck and as a mark of respect, touches his feet. Then they are baptised with the *Amrit* and the marriage ceremony starts. The couple goes around the sacred



fire while the priest reads four verses from the Holy Granth. As soon as he starts the first stanza, the round starts and ends when he has completed it. Four rounds are completed in the same way. The ceremony comes to an end with the final prayer.

But the Sikh marriage ceremony known as *Anand Karaj* i.e., the ceremony of bliss, which has been in practice since the days of Guru Amar Dass and finds reference in several ancient texts written by Sikh scholars, is more simple. Sikh Gurus had rejected the *Havna* ceremony by declaring :-

"Hom Jag Jap Tap Sabh Sanjam Tat Teerath Nahin Paya"

(Bhairo M : 5)

Therefore, in Sikh marriages the couple goes round the Adi Granth, which is always on the spot. The Kuka ceremony of marriage is more akin to Vedic form prevalent amongst the Hindus. ॐ

Thus it must be admitted with regret that Namdhari movement which was started to free the Sikhs from the penetrating influence of Brahminism has itself adopted the customs and rituals which the Sikh Gurus had themselves deprecated and thus the practices of the Namdharis are quite distinct from the precept of their proclaimed religion.

Baba Ram Singh had assigned the task of compiling *Rehatnama*, i. e., rules of conduct as prescribed by Guru Gobind Singh, to Bhai Rai Singh a devoted Namdhari disciple. Bhai Rai Singh visited Hazur Sahib to collect ॐ

the necessary material which was compiled by him some time after the starting of Namdhari sect by Baba Ram Singh on the Baisakhi of 1857. This *Rehatnama*, however, remained in manuscript form till Baba Partap Singh got it printed recently. Now it is included as appendix to the book "*Namdhari Nitnem*" i.e., Namdhari's book of daily meditation. It contains some rigid technical rules such as "*Kach-hera Pauncha Paiké Lahuna*", i.e., Remove your underwear only after you have worn another one" No such formal rules of symbolic significance are included in the Sikh code of conduct prescribed by Guru Gobind Singh. The fact is, however, that Namdharis have only made interpolations in the existing codes.

NAMDHARI LITERATURE

Baba Ram Singh, the founder of Namdhari sect, preached boycott of western education and civilization as a matter of faith. As a result the Namdharis were deprived of the benefits which accompanied knowledge of English language. The result is that we do not have any authentic literature about the Namdharis. Whatever little has been written by the Namdharis themselves is available only in Punjabi language and that too suffers from lack of the unity of ideas or theme.

Perhaps the earliest piece of literature about Namdharis, if at all it can be so called, is the *Rehatnama*, i.e., the code of conduct alleged to be written by Baba Ram Singh himself. The other record forms various letters written by Baba Ram Singh to his relatives and friends from prison when he was living in exile. These contain his teachings, accounts of his personal life and out-lines of future course of action for his disciples.

Another important piece of literature about the Namdharis is the official documents and extracts from contempo-



rary Indian newspapers, covering the period 1863 onwards, which have been compiled and classified by Nahar Singh, M.A., in a book form under the head "Gooroo Ram Singh and the Kuka Sikhs." This provides a valuable original source material lying in the National Archives of India, New Delhi, the West Pakistan Old Records Office, Anarkali Tomb, Lahore; in the district record rooms and in the Munshi Khana Records of the erstwhile Sikh States of the Punjab. While arranging the documents the compiler has successfully maintained the continuity of events interlinked. But these documents were published only about a decade ago.

Sri Satguru Bilas by Dhian Singh was published in 1942. It has been written in *Brij Bhasha* and gives a poetic description of the life and teachings of Baba Ram Singh. To quote one passage from the book which symbolises devotion, myth and history :-

*Sis diye ar si na kari jin,
Sikhen tahe ke men balihari.
Gou hit go itni seh kar jin,
Bucharh mar ke dhen ubari.
Te Sikh wa Gur Ram Margind ko,
Dhian Margind karot juhari.
Gou gariban palen ke hit,
Ram Margind aiyo tan dhari.*

i.e. They gave their heads undaunted.
I sacrifice myself to those Sikhs;
They suffered so much for the sake of cow,
They killed the butchers to save the kine.
To those Sikhs and their Guru Ram Singh,
Dhian Singh (author) salutes.
To protect the cow and the poor,
Ram Singh has taken birth in human form."

While the first four lines in the above passage refer to the historical incident at Malerkotla, the subsequent two lines express the devotion and sentiments of the writer while the last two lines contain the Namdhari's mythical belief that Baba Ram Singh was a god incarnate.

Then in 1946, Dr Ganda Singh's book *Kukia Di Vithiya* was published. It contradicts Namdharis' theory of succession regarding Guruship. Ganda Singh successfully proves that Ajaipal Singh could not be Guru Gobind Singh living in disguise. Further, with the help of letters written by Baba Ram Singh while in exile the author proves that Baba Ram Singh had no intention to found a separate sect or to claim any special status such as that of a Guru for himself. The book raised a good deal of controversy and a few books have been written by the Namdhari authors to meet the arguments advanced by Dr. Ganda Singh who is a recognised authority on the history of Punjab. Dr. Ganda Singh has also written several articles in support of his assertions. His latest book on the subject is in English and its title is "Guru Gobind Singh's Death at Nanded and Examination of the Succession Theories" in which he has reproduced and interpreted the various passages in ancient books which are quoted and relied upon by Kukas in support of their succession theory and has thereby shown the hollowness of the Namdharis' claim that Guru Gobind Singh had escaped from Nanded to live in disguise. In reply to Dr. Ganda Singh's aforementioned book "Guru Gobind Singh's Death at Nanded : Examination of the Succession Theories", the Namdharis have recently published a book "*Koorh Na Puje Sach Nun Sau Gharhai Gharhiye*" written by Mehar Singh. In this

book the author has tried to rebut the arguments of Dr. Ganda Singh by differently interpreting the various quotations referred to by Dr. Ganda Singh. Although Mehar Singh's book lacks in cohesion yet it is a good attempt to put forward Namdharis' point of view on the subject.

In 1947, Nidhan Singh Alam, a devoted conservative Namdhari writer published his book "*Jug Paltao Satguru.*" It is a biography of Baba Ram Singh. A special feature of this book is that it has a foreword written by late S. Sardul Singh Caveshar, a well known Congress leader and a Sikh missionary. S. Nidhan Singh Alam was the editor of a Punjabi daily "*KUKA*" published from Lahore and is also a Kuka missionary. He is also author of "*Hum Hindu Hain*" in which he has tried to establish that Sikhism is only an offshoot of Hinduism and is, therefore, not a sovereign faith. He wrote this book in reply to Bhai Kahan Singh's scholarly work "*Hum Hindu Nahin*" wherein he has very ably established by quoting extensively from the Sikh scriptures that Sikhism is an independent religion and not a sheer sect of Hinduism. This book by Nidhan Singh substantiates the allegation against the Namdhari pontiffs that they have gone astray from the path laid down by Baba Ram Singh, who had founded the "Sant Khalsa" as a true believer in the teachings of Guru Gobind Singh who had declared :

*"Jab Lag Rahe Khalsa Niara, Tab Lag Tej Deo Men Sara
Jab Eh Gahe Biprin Ki Reet, Men Na Karun in ki Parteet"*

i.e. so long Khalsa keeps intact its separate identity,
My blessings are with it,
When it goes the Brahminic way,
I will not have anything to do with it.

S. Nidhan Singh is also the author of "*Guru Pad Parkash*" (3 volumes) in which he has tried to defend personal Guruship as against treating the holy scripture as a Guru. He wrote this book in reply to S. Sewa Singh's well known publication "*Guru Pad Nirency*" in which he has established that Granth Sahib alone is entitled to the status of Guru after the death of Guru Gobind Singh.

S. Nahar Singh published "*Namdhari Itihas*" in 1955. This is a book of history based on official documents and other authentic records but as all the publications of S. Nahar Singh are financed by the Namdharis, therefore, there is naturally a little bias for accepting the Namdhari view point.

In 1957, Inder Singh Chakarvarty published "*Malvin-der*", which literally means "The king of Malwa Region in Punjab". It is an epic, i.e., a long poem on the life of Baba Ram Singh. To quote a passage from this book, which expresses the determination of Baba Ram Singh for his mission :—

*"Kandey Beh Satluj De,
Bhar Chuli witch Neer.
Karda Han Partigya,
Sun Le Mere Veer.
Deson Jad Tak Gorian,
Tahin Lawan Na Kadh.
Tik Na Betharga Kadi,
Ik Than Dera Gad."*

i.e. On the bank of Satluj river,
 He took water in his palm.
 "I take this solemn vow,
 Listen O ! my brothers !
 So long as I don't oust,
 The Britishers from the country.
 I will not settle down,
 At any place whatsoever."

Another Namdhari writer is Tarn Singh "Vehmi". He published "*Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji Da Nadedon Bad Da Jiwan*". In this book, published in 1962, he has tried to support the Namdhari view point that Guru Gobind Singh did not die at Naded. However, the book lacks in continuity of ideas and deep insight into facts. The other books by Tarn Singh Vehmi are "*Panj Nirney*" and "*Jas Jiwan*".

"*Sikh Ithas Te Kuke*" by Amar Bharti is another book on Namdharis' view point about continuity of personal Guruship.

Besides Dr. Ganda Singh, another notable Sikh scholar who has done commendable work in presenting the Sikh view point with clarity and authenticity is Dr. Trilochan Singh. He has written a series of articles on the subject in the Sikh Review, Calcutta.

"*The Kukar*" by Dr. Fauja Singh is an authentic work on the political aspect of the Kuka movement. The author has intentionally avoided to touch the controversial topic of continuity of living Guruship.

"The Namdharis" by Dr. Ahluwalia is another work in English on the subject. But even this book is not comprehensive in describing the beliefs and practices of the Namdharis.

Special numbers of the Punjabi monthly **"Satjug"** provide useful material for writing from Namdhari view point.

"Shaheed Bilas" by Kala Singh is a poetic account of the Namdhari martyrs. The author laments the treacherous role of the rulers of Sikh States who helped the British in supressing the Kuka movement. The author writes :—

***"Kala Singh Dekho Kaun Ghatkan Nun,
Aeye Singh Hi Singhan De Marnen Nun."***

i.e. Kala Singh ! Look at the traitors of the nation,
Sikhs themselves have come to kill their fellow Sikhs.

To conclude, literature on the Namdharis is still in a skelton form, An unwavering Inquisitiveness to search more and more material on different aspects of this subject is needed. Writers with patience and insight are needed to undertake an objective study of the Namdhari sect.



BABA HARI SINGH

The personal magnetism of Baba Ram Singh was so great that he had succeeded in winning the love and allegiance of thousands who had come under his direct influence. He had also successfully introduced a social and religious code of his own. His dynamic personality and sincere teachings coupled with his practical life energised his adherents. But suddenly in June 1863, Baba Ram Singh was interned in his headquarters at Bhaini in Ludhiana District under semi-imprisonment conditions. Subsequently, he was arrested and detained in the Allahabad Fort in the first instance but as that place too was considered to be too near the Punjab, he was soon after removed to Rangoon.

But Baba Ram Singh was gifted by nature with a rare genius for making plans and directing their execution to completion. To keep the morale of his adherents high, he gave currency to certain prophecies through letters written by him from the prison. In one of his letters he mentioned that he would return 'at the *Sabz sohri*, the whisking of the broom (intended to mean the destruction of the government)." In another letter he said "Now the

prophecy of my return to the native country is to be fulfilled. I have to join my congregations after 6½ years."

Therefore, so long as Baba Ram Singh was alive and his followers believed that he would return to lead them, there was no question of appointing any successor pontiff. He was, however, anxious that his work should be continued because if he died without a successor, the sect founded by him might relapse.

He, therefore, in a letter written from Burma, where he was then imprisoned, and sent through Baba Darbara Singh, is alleged to have declared his brother Budh Singh as his successor. According to Namdhari sources this letter was read before the congregation and burnt with fire as it was intended to be concealed from the British officers. According to these sources the relevant portion read as under :—

"From today onward Budh Singh will be called as Hari Singh. He will keep Sikhism green. From today onward treat him as your head (*Sir Kartā*). I will not forgive anyone whom he disapproves but he can forgive anyone even if I do not approve of him."

S. Budh Singh s/o Jassa Singh s/o Ladha Singh was younger to Baba Ram Singh by four years. The name of his mother was Sada Kaur.

But it was not a smooth switch over. Many leading Namdhari saints including Baba Deva Singh, Baba Sudh

Singh, Sant Lal Singh refused to acknowledge him as their pontiff. Not only that even Bibi Nandan, daughter of Baba Ram Singh also refused to admit the claim of Baba Budh Singh as her father's successor and openly accused him of being a usurper and imposter.

On taking over the charge, Baba Hari Singh felt that the chief mission for him at that difficult moment was to keep up the morale of the adherents and to strengthen the organisation. With that end in view he decided to undertake the following tasks :—

- (i) To maintain and preserve Sri Bhaini Sahib as headquarters of the sect.
- (ii) To continue the institution of *Langar* (Free Kitchen).
- (iii) To enable the Namdharis to get rid of fear complex.
- (iv) To carry on the missionary work in a disciplined and organised manner.
- (v) To reduce the influence of those Namdhari saints who had refused to acknowledge him as the pontiff.
- (vi) To carry on the struggle against the British rule.

Baba Hari Singh was a cool-headed man, capable of making plans and directing their execution. He possessed talent to organise men for cause. He developed Bhaini Sahib into a centre of pilgrimage by constructing '*Ram Sarower*' i.e.,

a pond in memory of Baba Ram Singh along with a garden and a few residential rooms for the visitors. The pool soon acquired the reputation for sanctity as it was supposed to have been a favourite resort of Baba Ram Singh.

Baba Hari Singh was a true democrat. He removed all distinctions of high and low among his Sikhs. He wore the same cloth as his poor followers used to wear. He used to take his meal in common kitchen (*Langar*) along with his followers. He arranged contributions for *Langar* so that it could be continued uninterrupted. Refined wheat flour and purified butter were used to prepare the food. The system had already been set on foot by Baba Ram Singh and was simply enlarged and expanded by Baba Hari Singh. The institution proved a powerful aid in the propaganda work. *Langar* not only concentrated the attention of the Namdharis upon their Guru but also being the object of common patronage and support, it served as a strong bond of union among the new brotherhood. It also served as the most efficient means of advertisement and popularity.

Baba Hari Singh, with his saintly personality consolidated the anti-British movement launched by Baba Ram Singh and infused new enthusiasm amongst his coreligionists who were wavering. Though during his period the movement remained peaceful, yet Bhaini Sahib remained a volcano in the eyes of the British Government. Many a time Bhaini Sahib was searched and many Kukas were arrested and sentenced. A big picket of police was posted at the front gate of Bhaini Sahib.

A letter written by Mr. Warburton, District Suprin-

tendent of Police, Ludhiana to Col. H. N. Miller, Inspector General of Police, Punjab dated 31st August, 1878 reads as follows :—

“I think it my duty to point out that the Kukas are a source of political danger. Although at present they are comparatively few in number, I believe they are increasing, as proselytism is actively progressing. Ever since permission has been given for ten Kukas to visit Budh Singh at a time, Kukas from all parts come to Bhaini and put up in the neighbourhood and outside of Bhaini. At nights, meetings presided over by Budh Singh are occasionally held at a sort of shrine near the village of Latten, in Patiala territory: Their system of disseminating news or instructions rapidly is perfect. In the event of difficulties or should we sustain any reverses hereafter in any war, these Kukas are certain to show their teeth.”

The British reverses in Afghanistan and the reports of Russian friendliness circulated by Baba Hari Singh (Budh Singh) raised new hopes amongst the Kukas. This was a shrewd strategy adopted by Baba Hari Singh to build up morale of his adherents and to excite them to revolt. In August 1880, a report from Ferozepur reads, “It is commonly said among the Kuka sect that time has come for the Russians to invade India through Kabul.” A police report dated 9th October from Ludhiana reads “Lal Singh of Gumti stated that Budh Singh had told him that he had received letter from Bishen Singh to the effect that the Russians had assumed a hostile attitude towards England.”

In 1886 when information was received that Maharaja Dalip Singh had reached Russia, Baba Hari Singh sent Suba Bishen Singh to meet him there and help him in arranging the invasion of Punjab. Some more Kukas were also sent with presents and letters for the Maharaja in Russia.

But the British were also alert and special arrangements were made to detect the seditious activities of the sect. One Mr. A.S. went to Bhaini Sahib and posing as a devoted Kuka obtained some valuable information from Baba Hari Singh regarding his communications with Russia through Bishan Singh, Gurcharn Singh and many others. He also extracted information from Baba Hari Singh about Gurcharn Singh who was on his way to Russia to seek aid from the Czar. The British thereafter started keeping a watch on the movements of the aforesaid persons.

Through his extensive missionary tours which were undertaken only after prior permission from the government, Baba Hari Singh helped his adherents to hold firmly to their beliefs, neither flinching nor faltering. He took steps towards the organisation of the Kukas, whose number was increasing and who were spread over the whole province of Punjab. The work of teaching, preaching and administering to their spiritual needs could not, therefore, be carried on properly. The whole Sikh portion of the province was, therefore, divided into districts and sub-divisions in the charge of Subas, directly subordinate to the pontiff while Kuka emissaries and agents were stationed in many parts of India and in the States on its immediate border. This went a long way in strengthening the foundations of the sect and in carrying on the

propaganda in all parts of the country.

He was married to Jiwan Kaur and from her he had three sons. Partap Singh was born in Sambat 1946 Bikrami while Nihal Singh was born in 1949 Bikrami and the youngest Gurdial Singh was born in 1954 Bikrami.

He died in Samat 1963 Bikrami i. e., 1907 A. D. succeeded by Maharaj Partap Singh, his son, who was then living with him and was in charge of Langar (common kitchen) during his life time. Though a man of simple habits and great humility, he proved to be a shrewd organiser and during his pontificate, the Kukas made a great advance and preserved their separate identity.



MAHARAJ PARTAP SINGH

Baba Partap Singh was born on Chet Vadi 3, 1946 Bikrami or in March 1890 A. D. at village Bhaini Sahib in District Ludiana, the traditional headquarters of the Namdharis. His mother's name was Jiwan Kaur and that of father was Baba Hari Singh. At the age of four, he was put under a tutor Dhyani Singh of Qadirabad, who taught him how to read the Sikh scriptures namely Adi Granth and Dasam Granth which he learnt in a very short period. Thereafter, he was given instructions by Pandit Basant Singh in Hindu classicals such as Lughoo Sidhant, the Panjtantra, the Updesh etc. He also learnt Urdu to satisfy his urge for newspaper reading and also learnt English language to enable him to study literature on horses. He learnt music from Mastan Singh and Bhai Kalu Ji. He developed a special liking for the classical music. He was fond of playing 'Dilruba'. Besides, he received training in wrestling, horse-riding and swimming during his childhood. He accompanied his father Baba Hari Singh during his missionary tour and thus picked up the art of pontiffship.

He was seventeen years old when his father died and



the responsibility of leading the community fell upon his shoulders. On 13 Badi Poh Sambat 1971, when he was about 24 years of age, he was married to Bhupinder Kaur, daughter of Sardar Sunder Singh.

He, as a pontiff of the Namdharis, changed the political strategy of his community. After the Malerkotla incident, in which some 67 Namdharis were blown up with the canon, the whole of Namdhari community became a suspect in the eyes of the British. Baba Ram Singh and his 11 lieutenants were arrested and made State prisoners under the Bengal Regulation III of 1818. The headquarters at Bhaini were considered to be a breeding place of rebellion. A police post consisting of seven policemen, mainly Mohammedars, was posted at the main gate of the residence of the successor pontiff Baba Hari Singh Ji, father of Maharaj Partap Singh. Not more than five Kukas could enter the boundary limits of village Bhaini to pay respects to their religious preceptors. Social gatherings regarding births, marriages and deaths could only take place with the previous permission of the district authorities. Every Kuka, while visiting his relatives and friends in the near-by village, had to inform the police authorities of the circle in which his village was situated, and after reaching the village of his destination he had to present himself personally before the officer in-charge of the police post of the village concerned.

As a result of the British policy of suppressing the Namdharis ruthlessly and also due to Namdharis' policy of boycotting western education, the Namdharis were reduced to the position of illiterate masses. But with the rise of

political consciousness in the Hindu educated classes supported by Sikh masses under the leadership of Akalis, the Britishers wanted to win over the support of different sects to consolidate their hold on India.

Maharaj Partap Singh wanted that his followers should be a "forward and progressive people" and to achieve that end he wanted Namdharis to be loyal to the British Empire. He tried to inculcate the necessity of friendship and sympathetic intercourse.

The years 1924 to 1927 were largely years of Hindu-Muslim strife. The growth of the sectarian movement among the Hindus and the Muslims increased inter-communal tension. Lord Irwin announced the appointment of the Simon Commission on 8 November, 1924 to enquire into the working of the system of government, development of representative institutions in India and the need to establish the principle of responsible government or to extend, modify or restrict its applications. While moving the Simon Commission Bill in Parliament, Lord Birkenhead, Secretary of State for India, challenged the Indian statesmen to produce an agreed solution to the communal problem. The Indian leaders took up the gauntlet and convened an all-parties conference at which a sub-committee with Moti Lal Nehru as chairman was set up to evolve an agreed formula. It submitted its report, known as Nehru Report, in August 1928 which recommended joint electorates and reservation of seats for Muslim and non-Muslim minorities with the right to contest additional seats but made no mention of reservation of seats for any community in Punjab and Bengal.



Sikhs rejected the report as unjust and unfair and Master Tara Singh and Giani Sher Singh appended strong minutes of dissent. Baba Kharak Singh called upon the Sikhs to "Throw the Nehru Report into the waste paper basket." The Central Sikh League announced its determination to withhold its support from the Nehru Report. The Hindu leaders felt greatly perturbed over the walk out. Pandit Dharam Vir Singh of U. P. moved a resolution demanding that the Sikhs should be given the same measure of representation in the Punjab as other minorities enjoyed in other provinces. Pandit Neki Ram Sharma of Hissar supported the resolution, while Dr. Mohammad Alam and Maultana Zafar Ali Khan, both from the Punjab, opposed it. It was expected that the resolution would be carried out by a considerable majority, but Moti Lal Nehru stabbed the Sikhs in the back by intervening and siding with the Muslims by opposing the resolution as a result of which the resolution was lost by six votes. Moti Lal Nehru's volte-face alienated many a Sikh from the Congress and some of them lost their temper and remonstrated with Moti Lal Nehru. The Sikh leaders decided to boycott the Congress Session at Lahore, which was to be held in 1929, to "bring home to the Congress that the Sikhs are a living entity."

Maharaj Partap Singh did not want to displease the British, therefore, he himself kept aloof from the controversy, but he prompted his disciples to join the Congress session so as to let down the Akalis. Accordingly, a large number of Namdharis wearing their usual snow-white clothes joined the Congress Session under the command of Maharaj Nihal Singh, brother of Maharaj Partap Singh. Bibi Jiwan

Kaur, mother of Maharaj Partap Singh, also took active part in the Congress Session by managing the free kitchen for the Namdharis participating in it.

As a result the relations between the Namdharis and the Sikhs became strained. The Sikh priests expelled the Namdharis from the Sikh-fold and prohibited their entry into Sikh temples. Public condemnation of the un-Sikh like practices of the Namdharis started. To make a reconciliation, Maharaj Partap Singh organised an All Party Sikh Conference at Sri Bhaini Sahib in 1934. Leading Sikhs such as S. Sunder Singh Majithia, Bhai Jodh Singh, Master Tara Singh, Giani Sher Singh, Babu Sawan Singh, H. H. Bhai Sahib, Ajan Singh Bagrian, Sardar Bahadur Bhai Kahan Singh of Nabha and the heads of Nirmalas, Chief Khalsa Dewan, Udasī Maha Mandal, Akali Panch Khalsa Dewan, Budha Dal of Nihangs attended the conference.

Egoist wish invades the regions of religion also very powerfully. Every believer feels that there can never be another equally good religion, much less better and to satisfy this competitive egoism he finds faults with other people's faith. But it is futile to try to abolish wholly this egoist wish to feel peculiar and unique but it should be made moderate through the process of reconciliation. To achieve it one should avoid hurting sensitiveness of others by studiously eschewing all attempt to find fault with other's religion. Controversial propaganda should be avoided in the interest of peace. It is better to understand, appraise, appreciate than to ridicule, belittle, depreciate; better to make peace than war. The All Party Sikh Conference at Sri

Bhaini Sahib in 1934, therefore, at the instance of Maharaj Partap Singh, unanimously resolved as under :—

“This conference earnestly beseeks the all heads of the Sikh sects, propagandists, missionaries, musicians, editors and the other learned and responsible persons not to attack the sister Samperdas. At no cost one should propagate through objectionable means, but carry one’s mission in constructive manner.”

This conference helped Maharaj Partap Singh to boost his image, because he being the host, out of customary courtesy, many participants touched his feet to show their reverence, although they claimed to have never touched the feet of anyone during their life earlier. Thousands of devotees who attended the conference were served with free food from the Langer.

Majority of the Namdhari population is illiterate, ignorant and semi-civilised. This is not the fault of the people. The privileged leadership of the community deliberately kept the masses ignorant and illiterate on the pretext of boycotting the westren education and civilization. It helped the leadership to retain its hold and thus exploit the simple masses. This leadership deluded religion and politics of their virtues and instead introduced commercialism.

By following a dual policy and adopting duplicity in strategy Maharaj Partap Singh succeeded in retaining his following by promising attainment of spiritual and political advancements. He issued an injunction prohibiting his followers from joining any political party in the country



but himself flirted with all the political parties. He maintained close contacts with the British bureaucracy. He also developed links with Akali revolutionaries and provided shelter to Rattan Singh Babar Akali who was then a proclaimed offender. He met Jawahar Lal Nehru, then a top Congress leader, at Bhaini Sahib but when Governor Henry Crake called his explanation, he satisfied him by saying that it was purely a social call and of no political significance. After 1947 he actively canvassed for the Congress Party but in 1955 he flirted with the Jan Singh and attended its conference at Allahabad to demand a ban on cow slaughter inspite of Nehru's disapproval.

In ancient India, beef-eating was not only customary but it was an essential item also. For example, a hymn in Rig Veda (X 85)—which may be called the wedding hymn—describes the oldest marriage ritual. It reads :—

“The bridegroom and party proceed to the bride's house (X 17.1). where the well-adorned bride remains ready (IV. 58.9) to join the marriage feast. The guests are entertained with the flesh of cows killed on the occasion (X.85.13). The ceremony proper now commences. The bridegroom grasps the hand of the bride and leads her round the fire (X.85 36.38). These two acts constitute the essence of the marriage and the bridegroom is now the husband who takes her by hand (X 18.8).”

But subsequently, under the Brahminic influence the cow began to be treated as sacred and beef eating came to be

treated as a sin Swami Bhoomanand wrote about it as under :—

“In my long residence in the Punjab, and in my travels from Alwar to Peshwer, I came in contact with many educated Hindu gentlemen, but I was sorry to find that most of them did not study their own scriptures, and being ignorant of the manners and customs of their ancestors, were necessarily very narrow in their outlook I myself do not pretend to be a Sanskrit scholar, but my studies of our ancient books, mostly in English and vernacular translations, have opened my eyes to this fact that the Hindu society was not always just like the present one. For instance, we find in the Vedic literature, the ultimate authority and the fountain of knowledge clear evidence of inter-caste marriage, widow marriage elaborate yajna, animal sacrifices, drinking of Soma juice and the eating of food which is at present prohibited in the Hindu society”.

Sikhism, unlike Hinduism, does not lay down any strict rules, forbidding and enjoining the taking of any food. Sikh Gurus rejected superstitious restriction about dining. They taught that all food is the gift of God and all prejudices about it are entirely invalid Guru Nanak says :—

“Only that food defiles a man which impairs the body and creates complexes and passions in the mind.”

Hence Sikhism neither prohibits nor enjoins the taking of any food. It tends to train the mental faculty of

an individual to such a stage that when face to face with any such problem, he can decide for himself without wasting time in consulting a religious book or a moral guide. With regard to food, Sikhism provides a rational criterion, "whether or not the food we take, does in any way, injure our health."

Therefore, Sikhs are generally meat-eaters. This is in accordance with the criterion provided by the Gurus. In the light of the present medical knowledge, meat proteins are not only harmless, but also nutritionally superior to the vegetable proteins. According to Macauliff, Guru Nanak himself is stated to have taken the flesh of deer. In *Adi Granth*, the following verse by Guru Nank occurs :—

"Fools wrangle about flesh, but they know
not divine knowledge or meditation on God.
They know not what is flesh or what is vegetable,
or in what sin consists.

It was the custom of the gods to kill rhinoceroses,
perform *hom*, sacrifices and feasts.

Those who forswear flesh and hold their noses
when near it devour men at night.

They make pretence to the world, but
know not divine knowledge or meditation on God.

Nanak, why talk to a fool ? He cannot reply or
understand what is said to him.

He who acteth blindly is blind,
he hath no mental eyes.

Those whose guru is blind, eat things that ought not
to be eaten and abstain from what ought to be eaten.

In flesh we are conceived, from flesh we are born;
we are vessels of flesh.

Flesh' adorneth sacrifices and marriages;
flesh hath always been associated with them.

Flesh is allowed in the Purans, flesh is allowed in the
Books of Musalmans, flesh hath been
used in the four ages.

Women, men, kings and emperors
spring from flesh."

Therefore, Sikh Gurus certainly permitted meat-eating. Veneration of cow formed no part of the teachings of the Sikh Gurus, but the Sikh scriptures are silent about beef-eating. However, there are a few stray lines written by Guru Gobind Singh regretting the slaughter of the cow. These read as under :—

Oh Almighty ! This is my earnest request,
Save kine, killing demons,
Oh Lord ! Fulfilling my desire,
Relieve the kine of their sufferings,
And so do for me to remove my pain.

A careful analysis of the above verse reveals that the word 'kine' has been used only in symbolic sense and not in literal sense. Here it symbolises the weaker sections of society. The Guru felt keenly the barbarous inhumanities perpetrated by the then Mohammadan rulers on their subjects. Ghastly scenes were being daily enacted and the Guru, therefore, felt keenly about it and in the above verse prays to God for ameliorating the condition of the Hindus.

The Namdhari Pontiff Baba Partap Singh well realized that he and his successors couldn't hope to bask in the glory of Baba Ram Singh for ever. The number of his followers was rapidly declining and the new generation was losing faith in personal guruship. He, therefore, to retain his hold on the Namdharis needed an ideology. He, therefore, adopted ban on cow slaughter as an ideology. For this purpose he even entered into an alliance with the Jan Sangh and attended several conferences meant to demand ban on cow slaughter in India. According to Namdhari writers, once in 1955, when he was attending a conference at Allahabad, convened by the Jan Sangh Party, a friend of Nehru, then the Prime Minister of India, whispered something into his ears. Baba Partap Singh is said to have felt excited and proclaimed that he would even support a sweeper for the sake of cow and if Nehru is displeased, let him be.

However, due credit must be given to Baba Partap Singh for setting up a Baba Hari Singh Farm at Sri Jiwan Nagar where he maintained some cows of rare quality such as Putli of Haryana which yields as much as 63 lb. of milk. At All India Competition the cows of this farm often begged the first prize. He was also fond of horses and he had developed a shrewd judgement of their breed. He used to participate in races and once he bought a horse condemned by a military doctor for Rs 90/- only and this horse after receiving proper care and treatment won so many races.

He was also a patron of Punjabi language and convened a Punjabi Conference in October 1942 to chalk out a progra-

me for its development. This conference was presided over by S. Baldev Singh and was attended by such stalwarts as Bhai Jodh Singh,, Principal Teja Singh, Professor Abdul Majid Khan, Principal Ganga Singh and many others.

He was also a great admirer of classical music. In 1933 he organised a Gurmat Sangit Sammelan which was attended by a large number of singers of Sikh religious music. The best three participants were given fabulous rewards. He also once invited Krishan Rao, the well known musician, and Panna Lal Kathak, the renowned classical singer, and duly honoured them.

He was far-sighted and could foresee the coming events. He visualised the end of British rule in India and the possible migration of communities thereafter as a consequence of the creation of Pakistan for the Muslims. He, therefore, planned a Namdhari State by concentrating his followers at one place. With that end in view he contracted to purchase four villages namely Jagmalera, Chachal, Damdama and Haripur in Sirsa Tehsil from a Hindu landlord for an alleged sum of Rs. 24 lakhs.

This land was being cultivated by Muslim occupancy tenants who paid no rent to the landlord. But Baba Partap Singh as a shrewd and intelligent person could foresee that all these Muslim tillers of this land would migrate to Pakistan and as such no risk was involved in getting possession from them. He asked his followers to contribute at the rate of Rs. 5500/- per 25 acres of land. Many Namdharis stepped forward to share this enterprise and in this way a sum of rupees

twenty Lakhs was collected. As Maharaj Partap Singh was the spiritual head of the sect, none dared demand any receipt for his contribution. In a private register maintained by Maharaj Partap Singh the names of the contributors were recorded and this register was not open to inspection.

Subsequently, a dispute arose between Maharaj Partap Singh and a section of his followers led by Sardar Ghasita Singh, once a trusted lieutenant and Suba of Maharaj Partap Singh. The whole land was purchased in the name of Maharaj Partap Singh on the pretext of avoiding pre-emption. It was promised that after the expiry of one year i. e. the limitation prescribed for filing pre-emption suit, the land will be mutated in the names of real purchasers in accordance with the purchase money contributed by each of them. But many years passed and the mutations in the names of vendees were not got entered inspite of repeated demands. The land was actually purchased for rupees twenty lakhs but its ostensible sale price was shown as rupees twenty-four lakhs. Therefore, when vendees pressed for transfer of their share, this amount of rupees 4 lakhs over and above the actual cost price was also claimed by Maharaj Partap Singh. Besides, he demanded Rs. 500 more for each 25 acres as registration charges. When the demand of the vendees gained momentum, he transferred physical possession to them without mutations, by measuring with his own *Jarib*, an instrument for measuring lands, which the vendees alleged to be of lesser length. Consequently, each purchaser of 25 acres could get possession of 18 acres only. The rebels, therefore, alleged that Maharaj Partap Singh accumulated Rs. 4 Lakhs in cash and 100 acres of land through this

transaction without any investment and without any right. Further, it was alleged that those Namdharis who were allotted land under Muslim occupancy tenants were entitled according to government rules to double the area but Maharaj Partap Singh gave them only half of what was actually due to them under the government rules. Moreover, the land was purchased along with houses therein but Maharaj Partap Singh charged extra price for these houses from his disciples.

All this led to large scale litigation in the civil courts between the pontiff and his disciples. Sardar Ghasita Singh, the rebel leader, was murdered in 1958 and Baba Bir Singh, son of Maharaj Partap Singh, alongwith three others, was tried for this murder although he was honourably acquitted by the District and Sessions Judge. In the civil suits, Maharaj Partap Singh was summoned by the court to make a personal appearance and state the facts on oath. Maharaj Partap Singh was not inclined to appear as Baba Ram Singh, the founder of the faith, had preached that all disputes should be settled outside the courts through the intervention of the brotherhood. All this caused a lot of tension and worry to Maharaj Partap Singh which deteriorated his health. The cases were fixed for 24-8-1959 but before that Maharaj Partap Singh died on 5 Bhadon 2016 Bikrmi.



BABA JAGJIT SINGH

He is the present living pontiff of the Namdhari sect. He is 56 years old and is the eldest son of Maharaj Partap Singh. He was only four years old when his mother Bhupinder Kaur died and therefore he was brought up by Gurmukh Singh Jhabber who is related to Kartar Singh Jhabber of Nankana Sahib fame. He received no formal schooling but was introduced to reading of Sikh scriptures by Balwant Singh. He also learnt classical music from Bhai Harnam Singh Chowanda and therefore he enchants the congregation by singing himself the hymns of the Gurus. *Taosh* is his favourite musical instrument which he plays upon.

He has married twice as his first wife died issueless. He has one daughter "Biba" from his present living wife, Shrimati Chand Kaur who is daughter of *Sarwan Singh*, a Jat Sikh of village *Baja Khana* in Faridkot District.

By nature, he is humble and God-fearing. He is polite to talk. He preaches tolerance towards other's religion. He is of the view that points of similarity rather than differences

should be stressed to unite mankind. He frequently visits the Hindu congregations and Hinduism has made its impact on his personality. He is a strong believer in caste distinctions and does not eat any food touched by a non-Namdhari Sikh.

He believes in flexibility of ideas and symbolises synthesis of tradition and modernity.

The Namdharis due to their policy of boycott of every thing western kept aloof from English education because syllabus therein included something which the Namdharis due to undue pride and unreasonable self-conceit and vanity looked upon with contempt. They could never be brought to admit that sound and useful learning was possible through western education. They had given to this prejudice a peculiar form of moral philosophy and had supported it on religious principles which they believed to be infallible. The study of English or attempting to obtain a post in government service or securing any other lucrative employment was considered highly discreditable.

But thanks to the enlightened leadership of the present pontiff Baba Jagjit Singh ji, this prejudice has now much slackened. These prejudices against everything western have been mitigated to a considerable extent and the Namdharis are gradually freeing themselves from old prejudices and rapidly taking to the study of English language. To impart education to the children, a Maharaj Hari Singh Namdhari High School has been started in village Jiwan Nagar, Tehsil and Dist. Sirsa, the present headquarter of the pontiff, with a

land of about 500 acres attached to it. Free education is imparted here from primary to high classes.

Baba Jagjit Singh has aligned himself with the progressive forces in the country. He is an active member of the World Council of Peace. He was also elected President of the Punjab and Haryana States' Peace Councils for a term and presided over its annual session held at Sirsa in the year 1966. It is a strange alliance because the World Peace Council is an organisation dominated by the pro-Moscow Communists who consider religion to be "opium" and religious pontiffs to be the greatest reactionaries. Similarly, religious heads in India think of the Communists as atheists. But common interest makes strange bed fellows.

Baba ji is equally near to the conservative elements in the country. He is the honorary Vice-President of the International Vegetarian Union and in 1973 he presided over the Third National Vegetarian Convention held at Ludhiana. He asks his disciples not only to be staunch vegetarians but also to avoid tea, coffee, soft and hard drinks. They are persuaded to drink pond water or in the alternative water drawn from a well and to boycott the water of the hand pumps which according to him is non-vegetarian as the part which draws water upward is made of leather. To help solve the food problem, Baba Jagjit Singh preaches that the people should wash their plates after taking their meals and drink the remnant. This practice is being followed by the Namdharis for long.

Like all his predecessors, he is a worshipper of the cow. He acts in alliance with the Jan Sangh and other reac-

tionary Hindu elements in agitating for complete ban on cow slaughter in the country. He attends conventions called for this purpose.

But at the same time he has done some constructive work to improve the lot of the cows in his area. He keeps and maintains in his personal farm, cows of rare quality which have beaten the national milk production records. One of his cows won the first prize continuously for five years in the All India Milk Yielding Competitions. For this the Government of India awarded him the title Gopal Ratna alongwith a Gold Medal in the year 1964.

He is helping and encouraging his adherents to switch over to modernity. While his predecessors opposed the construction of link roads to save their adherents from the influences of city life, Baba Jagjit Singh has helped in construction of pucca link roads to enable the people living in Namdhari villages to market their produce themselves to earn a competitive price for it.

But even in the field of agriculture he is not in favour of giving up traditional methods of cultivation. According to him, chemical fertilizers have done a great harm to the quality of produce and soil fertility. Besides, these chemicals have adverse effects on human and animal health. He, therefore, asks his adherents to use traditional fertilizers such as gobar to increase food production.

Similarly, he is against the use of modern method of medical treatment as according to him it leads to drug

addiction. He, therefore, preaches use of naturopathy to his adherents.

He is a great lover of sports and classical music and organises competitions in these fields to inculcate a love for these things in the coming generations.

In the end, we may conclude that he is a living symbol of flexibility and toleration. He represents a synthesis of modernity and traditionalism.



Bibliography

ENGLISH BOOKS

ETHICS OF THE SIKHS by Avtar Singh, Punjabi University, Patiala

GURU GOBIND SINGH'S DEATH AT NANDED AND EXAMINATION OF THE SUCCESSION THEORIES by Dr. Ganda Singh; Sikh Cultural Centre, Calcutta.

GOOROO RAM SINGH AND THE KUKA SIKHS —Documents 1863 - 71 by Nahar Singh; Amrit Book Co. New Delhi.

KUKAS —THE FREEDOM FIGHTERS OF THE PUNJAB by M. M. Ahluwalia; Allied Publishers, Delhi.

KUKA MOVEMENT by Fauja Singh Bajwa; Moti Lal Banarsi Das, Delhi.

LIFE OF GURU GOBIND SINGH by Prof. Kartar Singh; Lahore Book Shop, Ludhiana.

LORD OF VIRTUES AND FORTUNES by Nihal Singh, Author's.

ARTICLES

NEW LIGHT ON THE LIFE OF GURU GOBIND SINGH (1971) by Shiv Lal, Indian Progress Weekly, Delhi.

NEW NONSENSE ON THE LIFE OF GURU GOBIND SINGH (1971) by Dr. Trilochan Singh, Sikh Review, Calcutta.

MORE NONSENSE ON GURU GOBIND SINGH (1971) by Dr. Trilochan Singh, Sikh Review, Calcutta.

NAMDHARIS, THEIR PROPAGANDA AND INDIAN PROGRESS (1971) by Capt. Bhag Singh; Sikh Review, Calcutta.

NATURE OF GURUSHIP ACCORDING TO NAMDHARI TRADITION (1974) by Swarn Singh Sanehi; I. S. P. C. K. Post Box 1585, Delhi.

PUNJABI BOOKS

JUG PALTAOO SATGURU by Nidhan Singh Alam; Namdhari Sabha, Delhi.

KOORH NA PUJE SACH NUN SAU GHARHAT GHARHEAY by Mehar Singh; Namdhari Sangat, Village, Amritsar, Sirsa.

KOOKIAN DI VITHIA by Ganda Singh, Khalsa College, Amritsar.

MALVINDER by Inder Singh Chakervarti; Author, Delhi.

NAMDHARI ITHAS by Nahar Singh, Author's.

NANDEDON BAD DASAM GURU DARSHAN by Tarn Singh Vehmi, Author's.

SAT GURU PARTAP SINGH JI DE CHAMAT-KARE by Master Nihal Singh; Author's.

SEETALTA DA SOTAR by Nihal Singh, Namdhari History Research Society. V. Jiwan Nagar, Sirsa.

SRI GURU GOBIND SINGH JI DA NANDEDON BAD, DA JIWAN by Tarn Singh Vehmi; Author's.

SOCIALISM DI SAHI TASWIR by Bhai Inder Singh; Mauji Publishers., Lajpat Nagar, Delhi.

JOURNALS

SATYUG Monthly; Special Issues on Satguru Hari Singh and Satguru Partap Singh.

INDEX

Afghanistan	79	<i>Guru Gobind Singh's Death</i>	
Agriculture	99	Giani Gian Singh's	20
Ajaipal Singh	23	version	
Akalis	83,85	Kavi Santokh Singh's	
All Parties Sikh		version	17
Conference	86	Koer Singh's version	17
Alopathy	99	Macauliff's account	23
Balak Singh	8,10,58	Namdhari version	23,24
Bahadur Shah	13,14	Saina Pat's version	14
Beef	88	Hari Singh Baba	75 to 81
Bhag Singh, Capt.	83	Harnam Singh Sant	42
Casteism	62	Jagjit Singh Baba	63,96
Central Sikh League	83	Jan Sangh	92
Civil Disobedience	39	Jawahar Lal Nehru	88
Congress	83	Jawahar Mal	58
Cow	92,99	Jodh Singh Bhai	86
Dalip Singh Maharaja	80	Kashmir	53
Devi Lal Choudhery	41	Kharak Singh	85
Diwan Kirpa Ram	53	Lahore	85
Education	97	Literature	68
Food	80	Lord Dalhousie	56
Ganda Singh	70	Malerkotla	32
Ghasita Singh	49,94	Marriage	64
Giani Kartar Singh	40	Meat	90,91
Giani Sher Singh	85,86	Moti Lal Nehru	84
Granth Sahib	1,18,25	Music	82,93,100
Gurdial Singh Maharaj	38		

<i>Namdhari</i>		<i>Ram Singh Baba</i>	
Ardas	44	Biography	27,18,48
Defined	2	Relations with Nepal	53
Dress	5	Relations with Russia	54
First Five	61	Initiation	58
Initiation	3	Ram Sarower	77
Marriage	64	<i>Rehatnama</i>	
Sub-sects	14	Bhai Prehlad's	2, 59
Way of life	61	Bhai Nand Lal's	59
Whether Sect	1	Russia	54
Why Kukas	4, 6, 11	Satgur Bilas	69
Nehru Report	14	Shabeed Bilas	74
Neki Ram Sharma	83	Sports	100
Nepal	53	Sunder Singh Majithia	86
Nihal Singh Maharaj	82, 95	Tara Singh Master	86
Partap Singh Maharaj	82, 95	Vegetarian Union	98
Punjab	85	World Peace	98
Punjabi	92		

INDEX

Afghanistan	79	<i>Guru Gobind Singh's Death</i>	
Agriculture	89	Giani Gian Singh's	20
Ajaipal Singh	23	version	
Akalis	83,85	Kavi Santokh Singh's	
All Parties Sikh		version	17
Conference	86	Koer Singh's version	17
Alopathy	99	Macauliff's account	23
Balak Singh	8,10,58	Namdhari version	23,24
Bahadur Shah	13,14	Saina Pat's version	14
Beef	88	Hari Singh Baba	75 to 81
Bhag Singh, Capt.	63	Harnam Singh Sant	42
Casteism	62	Jagjit Singh Baba	63,96
Central Sikh League	13	Jan Sangh	92
Civil Disobedience	39	Jawahar Lal Nehru	88
Congress	85	Jawahar Mal	58
Cow	92,99	Jodh Singh Bhai	86
Dalip Singh Maharaja	80	Kashmir	53
Devi Lal Choudhery	41	Kharak Singh	85
Diwan Kirpa Ram	53	Lahore	83
Education	97	Literature	68
Food	89	Lord Dalhousie	56
Ganda Singh	70	Malerkotla	32
Ghasita Singh	49,94	Marriage	64
Giani Kartar Singh	40	Meat	90,91
Giani Sher Singh	85,86	Moti Lal Nehru	88
Granth Sahib	1,18,25	Music	82,93,100
Gurdial Singh Maharaj	38		

<i>Namdhari</i>		<i>Ram Singh Baba</i>	
Ardas	44	Biography	27,18,48
Defined	2	Relations with Nepal	53
Dress	5	Relations with Russia	54
First Five	61	Initiation	58
Initiation	3	Ram Sarower	77
Marriage	64	<i>Rehatnama</i>	
Sub-sects	34	Bhai Prehlad's	2, 59
Way of life	61	Bhai Nand Lal's	59
Whether Sect	1	Russia	54
Why Kukas	4, 6, 11	Satgur Bilas	69
Nehru Report	84	Shaheed Bilas	74
Neki Ram Sharma	85	Sports	100
Nepal	53	Sunder Singh Majithia	86
Nihal Singh Maharaj	82, 95	Tara Singh Master	86
Partap Singh Maharaj	82, 95	Vegetarian Union	98
Punjab	85	World Peace	98
Punjabi	92		

५३

५४

५५

५६

५७

५८

५९

६०

६१

B. 9 July, 1940: M.A. (HP); LL.B (Delhi). Business Administration Diploma; stand 6'2" Lawyer since 1962; ardent student of comparative religion and Sikh politics; President : Guru Gobind Singh Khalsa High Schoos, Sirsa; Legal Adviser Shrimoni Akali Dal, authored books " A Critique of Sikhism; (2) Islam and Sikhism; (3) Gandhi and the Sikhs; (4) The Versatile Guru Nanak; (5) The Politics of Partition; (6) Short stories in Panjabi; (7) Articles in the Spokesman; (8) Contributed articles on Giani Sher Singh and Saka Panja Saheb to the Encyclopaedia of Sikhism.



Gurmit Singh
Let's Take A New Look.

S. Hukam Singh Ex-Speaker of Lok Sabha writes about him.

"I have known this youngman and admire his interests in Sikh literature and Sikh history. His devotion and earnestness have not been recognised and his contribution not appreciated yet. He can be very useful I am rather sorry that he is languishing in a small place, but I am glad that even then he is doing good research.

Sardar Gurmit Singh shows deep understanding and vast study of the literature. I have respect for his views and appreciation for his knowledge."